American Film

Journal of the Film and Television Arts

May 1976

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American Film

Journal of the Film and Television Arts

Contents

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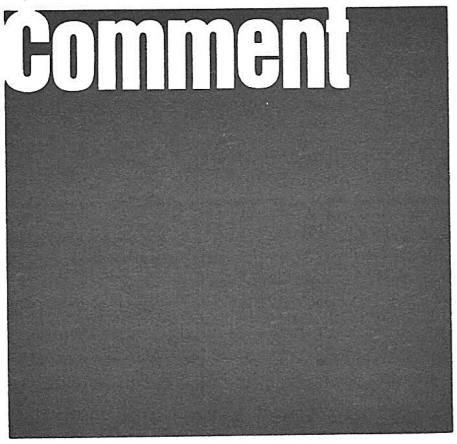
The American Film Institute is an independent, non-profit organization serving the public interest, established in 1967 by the National Endowment for the Arts to advance the art of film and television in the United States of America. The Institute preserves films, operates an advanced conservatory for filmmakers, gives assistance to new American filmmakers through grants and internships, provides guidance to film teachers and educators, publishes film books, periodicals and reference works, supports basic research, and operates a national film repertory exhibition program.

Choice or Overkill?



A press release from an electronics firm informed me recently that for $1,300 I could buy an appendage for my TV set which would allow me to record on videotape one program while watching another. The device had other uses. With a timer device I could be away from home and record a program for later viewing; or, I could record the program I was watching for reviewing; and I could also play prerecorded videotapes—though no mention was made of the kind of material on these recordings.

Assuming I might have the $1,300 investment required, along with $15 for each hour's worth of blank tape I would need, I began wondering how necessary to me was this latest home product of our ever-advancing electronic age. I looked over a day's listing of programming to see what there was that I wouldn't want to miss, assuming I had to miss it. Would I want to save for viewing in tranquility "Chico and the Man," "Hollywood Squares," "The Bionic Woman," "Cannon," the nth rerun of a "Star Trek" episode, NBC, ABC, or CBS News? None of this, I discovered, was essential to my quests for information, knowledge, or entertainment. It was okay, and reasonably diverting, to watch "The Bionic Woman" or "Cannon," if I had nothing else to do, but to save them? Invest $1,300 for such a purpose, plus the $15 for each recorded hour? (True enough, the tapes are erasable and almost infinitely reusable, but the fact of recording implies the fact of keeping.)

What has occurred to me is that the onward march of technology has begun to outdistance the programming complex. There they are, up there, communication satellites, incredibly complicated mechanisms, powered by beams which can be neither seen nor felt, works of engineering genius, placed in our heavens by the science of rocketry, and what are they carrying? Programs of such trivia that without them not one person's mind or feelings would be in any way affected. Cable systems are proliferating, opening up a minimum of twenty new channels for each home subscriber, and all it would take for forty channels would be one more wire, and for thousands more there are laser and maser transmission modes in development, leading beyond the wired society to the wireless wire society. And what are we to do with all this?

The billions of dollars worth of business that the communications explosion represents is occupying the minds and energies of executives, lawyers, accountants, technicians, and Congress. Large corporations are swinging huge resources into new and as yet unveiled electronic technology. There is no question that uses can be found for all of it, and if those uses provide profit, it will happen.

What I am dubious about is whether any of our minds will be the richer for it. The promise of television was glorious until finally one intrepid FCC commissioner watched the tube for a week and became aware of a "vast wasteland." The wasteland has an oasis here and there, and one cannot say that it is either all bad or all good. More than anything else, it is a habit. And if all we get from the new technology are new habits, then what's all the excitement about? Perhaps only a kind of technological overkill.

As though intuitively aware of the coming proliferation of visual modes, the colleges are adding courses in film, videotape, and communication specialties, and the student population in these courses is also growing. It is the generation in college right now that may well have most to do with shaping not only tomorrow's technology, but, much more important, what it transmits. To measure up to the medium, talent and creativity in large quantity are going to be needed. One cannot, of course, teach either talent or creativity. On the other hand, they can be encouraged. And if we are to avoid a far vaster wasteland than ever envisaged by that FCC commissioner, then education must be made aware of the responsibility and the challenge.

Just as with today's primitive television and its still-primitive picture tube, the new communications technology can be used for profit, and it can be used for the mind's enrichment. Perhaps only ten years from now we will be able to press a few buttons on another new gadget and get any of a thousand programs. Will many, any, of them be really worth watching?

When this kind of question is raised, the usual answer is that the viewer will have choice. The viewer has choice now, and it's not all that much. A jukebox allows choice, too, and I know of no one who has claimed that the jukeboxes of the nation are a cultural resource. I do not endorse any sterile notion of what is culturally best or desirable, but the time is here for considering just what is implied by that word, "choice." And, if it is to be genuine choice, just how are we to get it when that explosive hour arrives?

H.A.

Letters

Gone, But Not Forgotten

I would like to augment some of the information relating to adaptations of F. Scott Fitzgerald's work contained in Hollis Alpert's article, "Fitzgerald, Hollywood, and *The Last Tycoon*" (March issue of *American Film*).

Alpert alluded to most of the major film adaptations of the novels and stories, in addition to those films and TV dramas concerned with aspects of Fitzgerald's life and career. Given the journal's dual emphasis on "the film and television arts," it may be of interest to your readers that the CBS drama series "Playhouse 90" presented several adaptations of Fitzgerald works in the late 1950s.

One of these was "The Last Tycoon." Adapted by Don Mankiewicz and directed by John Frankenheimer, the drama was broadcast in March 1957, with Jack Palance as Monroe Stahr. Television critic John Crosby commented: "Sketchy, unfinished, and experimental as it was, 'The Last Tycoon' was quite a TV drama—strange, haunting, and memorable." "Playhouse 90" also offered versions of *The Great Gatsby* and "The Rich Boy," a Fitzgerald short story. Several years earlier, "The Kraft Television Playhouse" produced a dramatization of "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz."

It is unfortunate (yet understandable) that many of television's worthwhile efforts are dismissed or forgotten. But in singling out even poor film versions of *Tender is the Night* and "Babylon Revisited" and failing to mention creditable TV work such as the "Playhouse 90" "Last Tycoon," the effect is to exalt one creative form at the expense of the other.

I do not fault Alpert for these omissions, but I would like to suggest that there are riches in television's past waiting to be rediscovered by enterprising and open-minded scholars who may in time awaken serious interest in a vital branch of our culture that remains largely unexplored.

Saul N. Scher
Associate Professor Broadcasting-Film
University of Maine
Orono, Maine

We'll Ask Him

Win Sharples's enthusiastic support for film music is so greatly needed these days, particularly after the sad death of Bernard Herrmann in December, that there should be no arguing about his opinions. But as he has been almost too generous to our own organization (Miklos Rozsa Society), I hope I may be allowed to amend some minor errors and omissions.

1. *The "Seventh" Voyage of Sinbad* was a splendid Bernard Herrmann score of 1958 (recently reissued on records); it was *The "Golden" Voyage* that provided Miklos Rozsa's most recent vehicle in 1974. And while many of our members did work hard for a record release, it would be unfair for the MRS to claim credit for the eventual appearance of such a disc. That came only at the last moment from an English record company after American backers had shown their usual lack of interest where serious film music is concerned.

2. *Sinbad* and the *Tripartita* are not the only Rozsa works to have been completed recently; a number of songs and choruses also await public discovery.

3. So contagious is the new enthusiasm for the rediscovered art of film music that there are now at least *ten* organizations devoted to the kind of study and work that Sharples recommends. They are spread from Belgium to New Zealand and range from recording societies and scholarly journals to plain old "fan clubs." The potential is tremendous. Can we hope to hear more on this subject from Sharples in the future?

John Fitzpatrick
Director
The Miklos Rozsa Society

Fair Is Fair

A note on Kenneth Turan's amusing consumer guide to film books, "The Nostalgia Industry," in the January-February issue. As a film teacher, and occasional writer for the *International Film Guide*, published by Tantivy Press and A. S. Barnes, I feel it's only fair to point out that not all Tantivy/Barnes publications fall into the paste-up film-fan genre cited by Turan.

Their *International Film Guide*, for instance, provides specific information about worldwide film production and distribution not available from other sources; and I've found that their London Film School textbooks, *Directing Motion Pictures*, *Film Design*, *Practical Motion Picture Photography*, and *Photographic Theory for the Motion Picture Cameraman*, are the most practical books on professional filmmaking I've ever used with students.

Margot Kernan
Washington, D.C.

Festival Report

From Adelaide to Acapulco

Michael Webb

Film festivals come in all shapes and sizes and proliferate alarmingly. Six Marx Brothers films at a neighborhood theater are billed as a festival. There are local and international festivals for children and animators, shorts and documentaries, TV commercials and sports films, and festivals devoted to peace and understanding among men. Some filmmakers outtravel Kissinger to present their work, or to serve on juries, at festivals from Adelaide to Acapulco.

Karen Arthur, whose first feature, *Legacy*, enjoyed a succès d'estime, has taken her film to sixteen events, and still the invitations roll in. Older directors, like Frank Capra and Rouben Mamoulian, are in great demand for retrospectives. An insatiable critic could spend every day of the year at a film festival and still miss out on some. In short, festivals have become a growth industry: a mixture, like the movies, of art and hucksterism, glamour and greed, discovery and frustration.

Every festival goer is confronted with agonizing choices. Should he linger over dinner or rush off to a three-hour odyssey about a catatonic Belgian governess or a new Bulgarian film on partisans versus the Nazis? Neither sounds enticing, but if he stays away one of the films is sure to be hailed as revelation. It's best in these cases to sit near the exit, and plan a quick dash to the next attraction if the first choice doesn't work out. If the festival goer stays too long he may be hooked for all the wrong reasons and begin to feel like Malcolm McDowell in *Clockwork Orange*, strapped to his seat, eyes forced open. Tehran solved that problem last year by locking the doors after the showing began. Parties and press conferences, eating and sleeping, further encroach on time and complicate the choice.

The great earth mother of festivals is Cannes, an event that opens the season and contains within it the seeds of a score of rivals. It attracts around 30,000 participants, at least half of whom seem simultaneously to be looking for a table on the Carlton terrace. At Cannes, *where* you are seen is more important than *what* you see. The beach cafes all serve much the same food at similar astronomical prices, but one cafe will be crowded and the next half-empty.

A press card will get you anywhere; a mere jury member may find the door slammed in his face. An early entry of the festival goer's name in one of the daily festival bulletins will guarantee a score of party invitations; without such identification he'll have to make do with such open events as the foreign press party—a thousand guests scrambling for a canned sardine at the Soviet stand (after early arrivals eat the caviar and strip bare the French and Italian buffets). Last year MGM hired Kirk Kekorian's yacht and hosted a series of extravagant receptions; the booby prize was the Superman party—scotch and peanuts on a boat, not much larger than a dingy, which pitched and fell until the deck was covered with scotch, peanuts, and broken glass.

In Cannes, status is for sale. Last year a plutocrat arrived with a caseful of $20 bills that he passed out as tips. The word got around, and tables were cleared in anticipation of his arrival. At the other end of the scale, the price for mixing with the jet set (and their attendant hairdressers) is a bargain. Tickets for late shows at the Festival Palace carry the injunction "evening dress required." But for a few francs only the festival goer can buy a black plastic clip-on bow at the door and walk through in a check suit. Women get noticed by wearing as little as possible.

Cannes offers a choice of fifty films a day in a three-ring circus. The smart or the unadventurous spend the day on the beach, see one of the films in the competition, and go on to dinner. Intellectuals, poseurs, and some critics see five in a row and stagger off to their favorite bar to spend much of the night discussing such marquee-busting titles as *The Death of the Flea Circus-Director* or *Otto-Caro Weiss Reforms his Firm*. Producers and flacks hire cinemas around town for trade

showings (or show video cassettes nonstop in hotel rooms) and then sit over drinks trying to make deals on titles like *Sexual Kung Fu in Hong Kong*.

The best bet for anyone who wants a balanced selection is to throw away his daily program, consign the stack of folders from his press box to the nearest trash can, and follow the footsteps of someone whose judgment he respects. Of course, *he* may be following someone else. A crowd outside a cinema on the Rue d'Antibes used to indicate a rather tame sex import that was being mobbed by locals and gullible distributors. Now that the French can see homemade hard-core they're more likely to flock to a rare revival of *Mary Poppins*.

If one gets bored with watching movies he can have great fun actually reading those press handouts. They range from glossy, four-color brochures that provide no information at all to mimeographed tracts full of outrageous claims and incomprehensible plot summaries. A few samples:

(From *Perspectives of French Cinema*) "The Lumière brothers invented the cinema; Henri Langlois gave it form. That is all one needs to know."

(Complete synopsis of a new French film, without subtitles) "A child who refuses, an old man who has never accepted. Two people pleeing [sic], on the lose who do not want to be cooped up."

(From an Indian film magazine) "Like an honest producer he gave fullest attention to the making of the film and forgot for once to solicit the opinion of his impartial friends. When the film came to be released, the audience was rather pained to sit through a great deal of ordeal created by its oft repeated sequences and situations. His well-wishers advised him to clip the film immediately and make it fast."

For those who love movies and hate crowds there are plenty of alternatives to Cannes. Telluride, in Colorado, lasts three days, accommodates only 500 people, and all reservations are handled by one sweet-tempered girl in the Paradise Trips travel agency. New York and Chicago offer an idiosyncratic choice of a whole year of international festivals. FILMEX, by contrast, is growing rapidly, a supercolossal production rising from the vacant Hollywood lots. Cork offers contemplation and Irish hospitality; Edinburgh a bracing program of all the arts and lousy weather to ensure that one takes full advantage of them all. Tehran is a fulfillment of everyone's deathwish fantasies, as the world's worst taxi drivers speed recklessly from hotel to cinema and back. Survivors are offered a trip to Persepolis. Berlin is highly politicized and haunted by ghosts that even the brightest neon cannot exorcise. London offers one of the best film selections but is oversubscribed. Pula shows the newest Yugoslav films in a Roman amphitheater.

But the most improbable must surely be the festival of experimental cinema that opens on Christmas Day in the Belgian resort of Knokke le-Zoute. So great are the scandals it predictably creates that it can be held only once every three or four years. Icy gales lash across the shuttered seafront; inside the casino where the screenings are held, the climate is like that of a tropical rain forest, as clouds of steam ascend from discarded wraps. Downstairs are elegantly attired gamblers; upstairs the pick of the world's avant-garde filmmakers watch and fiercely debate each other's work among the surrealist murals of René Magritte.

Screenings are more or less continuous from mid-morning to four A.M.; you can tell at once if a film has been received favorably by the size or lack of a crowd at the bar. As each new film unreels, a bell is rung; the evocation of a boxing match is somehow appropriate. One year the authorities banned Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*. It was shown anyway in a hotel ballroom. The police got word of the screening and raided the hotel, taking care to announce their coming so that the film could be smuggled out the back door. Another screening was hastily arranged; again there was a well-advertised raid, and so it continued through the night.

At a later festival a band of Dutch filmmakers inflated a huge balloon in the lobby. It soon filled the entire space and drove the crowd of spectators almost into the street. The filmmakers set up a trampoline inside, took off their clothes, and began bouncing around under strobe lights. At the end of the festival, the jury (which included the Minister of Justice and the president of the National Bank) solemnly debated the merits of the films they had viewed. The Dutch provocateurs entered, seized the microphone, and announced that since none of the films were any good, the audience should elect a Miss Experimental Cinema and carry him or her on their shoulders through the streets. Three more years elapsed before the distinguished sponsors got over the shock.

Later this month I'm off to Cannes. I plan to prepare as much as possible in advance, rise early to read the carefully prepared and informative press books, see all the worthwhile films from beginning to end, enjoy three good meals a day and a swim before lunch, get plenty of sleep, and ignore those tiresome cynics who've been there too often before and think it's all a waste of time.

Michael Webb is film programming manager for the AFI Theater in Washington.

McMurtry on the Movies

Finding the Film

Larry McMurtry

In the first of these pieces I suggested that it was foolish—if not ludicrous—for Hollywood to keep hiring novelists to write its screenplays, since in at least nine-and-a-half cases out of ten the novelists will be found to be amateurs, with no technical knowledge, little screen sense, and at best only minimal aptitude for anything but grinding out their own prose.

At the time, that opinion seemed worth stating, if only because, obvious as it was, nobody had bothered to state it. Now six months have passed and the very necessity of writing these pieces has forced me to think about screenwriting more continuously than I ordinarily would have. Also, during this period, I have worked on four separate screen projects, and have reached the toying stage with no less than half a dozen more. The combination of these factors has taken me somewhat beyond my original position. It now seems arguable to me that—in a sense and to a degree—Hollywood has had no choice but to hire novelists. If they had had a better alternative I'm sure they would have taken it. Novelists make most producers and not a few directors quite uncomfortable, and they aren't hired because producers and directors love discomfort. Except of necessity, Hollywood wouldn't have lain down with novelists in the first place, and the reason it was a necessity was that novelists are the only writers around confident enough of their imaginations to deal—as it were, from strength—with the kaleidoscopic requirements of adaptation. Most novelists rather breezily assume—and, if they're good enough, perhaps accurately assume—that they can imagine themselves into any world. Offer them Tolkien, and they'll imagine hobbits; offer them Cecilia Holland, and they'll imagine the Middle Ages; offer them Edgar Rice Burroughs, and they'll imagine Cheeta. The hubris of novelists is that they will attempt to imagine *anything*; they can quickly convince themselves that they can feel their way into somebody else's world, no matter how poor a doorway the book (or the idea) to be adapted may seem.

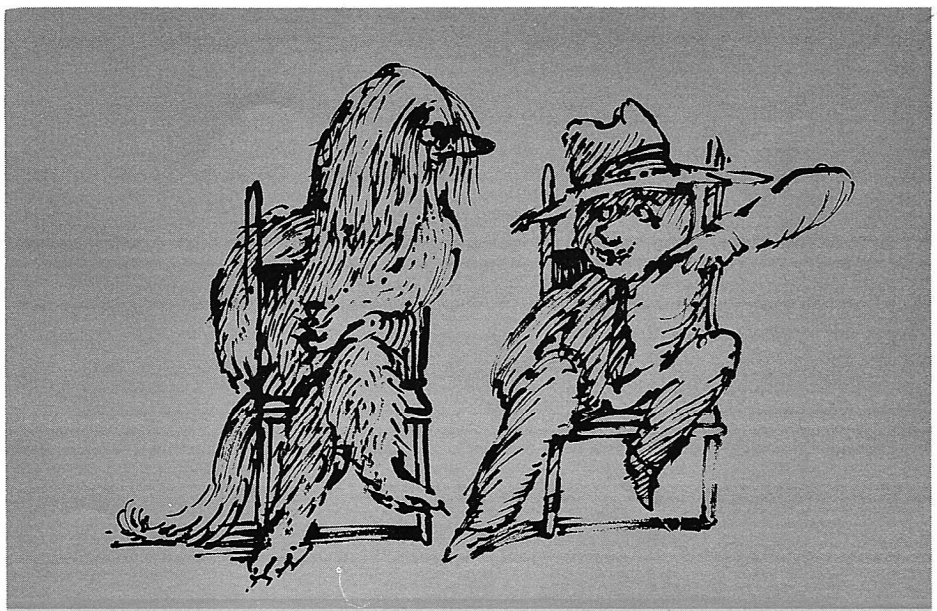
This conviction is of prime value to moviemakers, not because it guarantees them a producible finished product but because it provides the imaginative impetus that can get a project going. Novelists kick off many more projects than they finish; they provide the imaginative fuel for many movies on which their names will—rightly—not appear. In the end they may be found to have those very limitations I mentioned earlier: amateurishness, a lack of screen or even scene sense, and an inability to stay interested in what they're supposed to be doing. But before this disillusioning point is reached, they may just have managed to infuse the project with enough character and enough authenticity to bring it alive. If they can get it through this lift-off process, and alive in the imagination of the director, then a competent script doctor can take over the navigation and the novelist can drop off like a spent rocket, his prime function having been fulfilled.

I would like to know, as a matter of curiosity, how many good movies have been started by novelists and finished by scriptwriters—another possibly fruitful project for film historians. The scriptwriters might argue that these same movies would have got made cheaper and have been just as good if the novelists had been left out of it altogether. And the scriptwriters might be right; if they are wrong, it is probably because too few imaginatively fertile people can be satisfied to be just scriptwriters. As a craft it is even more vulnerable to arbitrary and extraneous interference than journalism, and how many journalists are happy in their work? Both screenwriting and journalism are serious and honorable crafts, but both force the craftsmen who practice them to be aware on a more or less daily basis of the ephemerality of the fruits of their labors. And, in both cases, only the craft really belongs to the craftsman: The product belongs to someone else.

At any rate, the more I think about it, the more inclined I am to attempt to answer my own charges against the novelist-screenwriter, and perhaps the first determinative question has to do with technical knowledge. What sort of things—technical things—does a professional screenwriter need to know? Even producers will generally admit that it's more important for a writer to know about people than about cameras and camera angles, and directors will usually prefer, sometimes vehemently prefer, that the writer know nothing—or at least say nothing—about how the scenes should be shot.

This may merely mean that directors are innately smarter and more self-protective than producers. They know that the writer who starts putting in camera angles today is looking to be a director tomorrow, but producers have yet to figure out that the writer who becomes a director tomorrow may well be a producer the day after. When working with a director, it is a waste of time to think of anything but scene, dialogue, and, if possible, transitions from scene to scene. The director is going to have plenty of time—years, usually—in which to decide where he wants to put the camera in a given scene, and in any case he won't really decide until five minutes before he shoots the scene. Producers, on the other hand, would really prefer that someone more controllable than directors plan these things in advance. What this means for the writers is that producers won't really feel they're getting a proper screenplay unless all the technical gobbledygook is there.

This puts me, personally, at a considerable disadvantage when doing a script for a producer, if only because attempting to



do up a script in legitimate script form plays hell with my typing. I always forget to capitalize the names of the characters, or to single-space dialogue; or, worse yet, I forget some of the time and remember some of the time, so that my scripts always come out of the typewriter looking patchy and typographically inconsistent. Such a script, thrust into the neatness of a producer's office—and their offices always seem to be as neat, if not as fiscally efficient, as Switzerland—can sometimes cause the unsuspecting producer to experience chest pains and other minor seizures. Producers can live with stupidity, but not with poor typing; it drives them wacko, because it's not the way things are supposed to be. In Hollywood things are supposed to be neatly typed; fortunately a vast secretarial corps exists, to shield producers from the irregularities of people such as myself.

I once foolishly placed a revised and much scribbled-up script directly into the hands of Peter Bart, assuming naturally that he would have his secretary retype it before he sat down to evaluate the changes. He didn't, and the sight of such raw scribbling upset him so that he evaluated me right off the picture—which, I note, has yet to grace the screen. It's too bad, too, because it's probably the only script I'll ever write in which an elephant dies in the middle of the Pecos River—a scene of such poignancy that, had it ever been seen, the tears of the nation would have created several new rivers.

Directors, of course, have their own irregularities, and are more tolerant of erratic typing. A writer who doesn't know the difference between a grip and a dolly can still get on with them, if the writer is sly. The nicer directors will even have their own secretaries type the script up in script form, unburdening the writer from the single greatest pressure in screenwriting, i.e. *when to capitalize!* With a first-rate director, all the technical knowledge a writer needs is the ability to count. Directors do like to have the scenes numbered, but if the content is rich enough they will even forgive the writer who loses count.

All successful directors and producers must cope constantly with the problem of selection. That is, they will always have available for consideration infinitely more material than they can hope to direct or produce. Books, scripts, treatments, scenarios, step-sheets, outlines, and the ubiquitous and free-floating "ideas" surround them like clouds of gnats. Since they are usually hard at work directing or producing an actual film, the best they can do is swat irritably at these clouds—hoping, always, to get time to think sensibly about their future. This gnat-free time never comes, but the hour of decision does: At some point they will have to decide which picture to do next, or else lose valuable momentum.

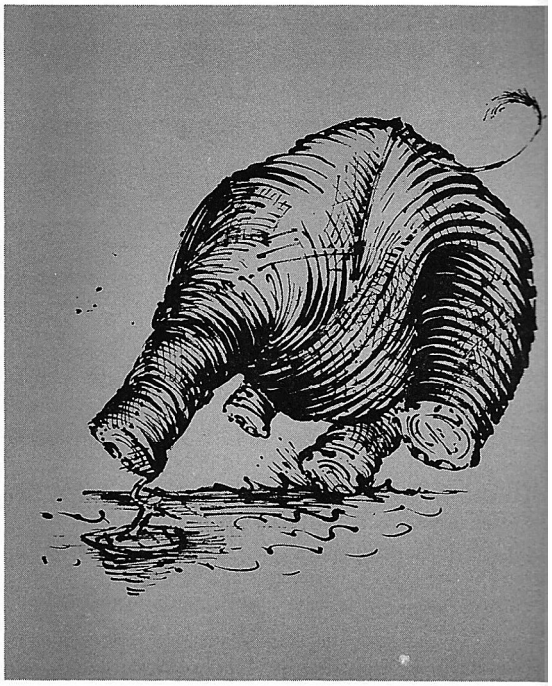
At this juncture, the writer becomes useful to them, if only by virtue of the fact that he will likely not be as rich as they are and thus is not obliged to worry about selection. The act that can seem such a burden to directors and studio heads—selecting—would seem a luxury to most writers, who, in order to earn a living, ordinarily take what jobs they're offered. Very few novelists consider themselves too good for screenwork; most of those who haven't done any simply haven't been asked. Screenwriting is by all odds the easiest money the profession of letters offers; and, as I suggested earlier in this series, money can be chemistry to a professional writer. Given a book to adapt and a cash offer, the active writer will set out to find the picture latent in the book—if there is a picture—or to create one if there isn't.

This is something neither the producer nor the director is likely to do: The producer won't have the talent, and the director won't have the time. Indeed, at this point, the director is apt to have little or no conviction in regard to the material. It is going to be up to the writer to show him why he should do the picture, which means, in effect, talking him into a picture he'll want to do. This means that the writer must more or less instantly size up both the book in his hand and the director, so quietly and sweetly getting drunk across the table from him. Are these two entities parallel lines, destined never to meet, or is there a way to make them intersect? Fortunately, directors are wistful, gullible people, and their imaginations can be had cheap. A few tricks, a little corn, a touch of razzmatazz, and there they are, wobbly with eagerness.

If the talking stage is successful and producer and director buy the story, causing one to have to launch into a script, the simplest and most necessary technical thing the writer should keep in mind is that movies cost a lot. If possible, characters should be restrained from wafting about over the globe, since wafting a production crew about over the globe is sure to cause tempers to fray in the budget department. A quick study of the classical unities wouldn't hurt—perhaps there's really a way to shoot the whole picture in a backyard in Sherman Oaks. Failing that, try for Kansas, where lodgings are still cheap. Also, it's helpful budgetwise to avoid costly natural disasters like flash floods and forest fires, unless, of course, the focus of the picture is a flash flood or a forest fire. Animals, of course, must be held to a minimum—anything larger than a cocker spaniel is going to cost too much to feed.

The lost Bogdanovich Western floundered over cast, initially, but if it hadn't it might well have floundered over the cost and logistics of the horse herd, cow herd, and miscellaneous buffalo and antelope that it required. Likewise, the (evidently) lost Peter Bart Western was not helped along by considerations of the expense of trundling an elephant all the way to the Pecos.

At the outset, of course, both producer and director will tell the writer that he shouldn't think of cost—to an extent the we-can-do-anything attitude still exists in Hollywood, but it is no more than a veneer, thinner now than a fingernail. In fact, the writer who forgets cost, concentrates on dramatic values, and lets his



characters chase themselves over hill and dale, presenting the director with an unbudgetable script, will not pile up screen credits very fast.

To this day, for example, I myself—despite all this pontificating—have only piled up one—fortunately a fat one. But look at all the fun I've had trying to get number two:

1) "Spawn of Evil" (treatment, unproduced, for Alan Pakula). This could have been the slave revolt picture to end all slave pictures. Set on the Natchez Trace in the 1830s, it had everything except Brando and Burton—they being precisely what it would have taken to get it made.
2) "Palo Duro" (screenplay, unproduced, for Bogdanovich). A Western that ought to have starred Wayne, Stewart, Fonda, Cybill Shepherd and probably Tatum O'Neal, not to mention Ben Johnson and the Clancy brothers. This one was a victim of star stupidity, of certain people not realizing how good they'd be.

Illustrations by Ken Rinciari

Continued on page 74

GROWING UP WITH THE MOVIES

The novelist recalls his Harlem boyhood when the white world on the screen curiously reflected the world he lived in.

Joan Crawford's straight, narrow, and lonely back. We are following her through the corridors of a moving train. She is looking for someone, or she is trying to escape from someone. She is eventually intercepted by, I think, Clark Gable.

I am fascinated by the movement on, and of, the screen, that movement which is something like the heaving and swelling of the sea (though I have not yet been to the sea): and which is also something like the light which moves on, and especially beneath, the water.

I am about seven. I am with my mother, or my aunt. The movie is *Dance, Fools, Dance*.

I don't remember the film. A child is far too self-centered to relate to any dilemma which does not somehow, relate to him—to his own evolving dilemma. The child escapes into what he would like his situation to be, and I certainly did not wish to be a fleeing fugitive on a moving train; and, also, with quite another part of my mind, I was aware that Joan Crawford was a white lady. Yet, I remember being sent to the store sometime later, and a colored woman, who, to me, looked exactly like Joan Crawford, was buying something. She was so incredibly beautiful—she seemed to be wearing the sunlight, rearranging it around her from time to time, with a movement of one hand, with a movement of her head, and with her smile—that, when she paid the man and started out of the store, I started out behind her. The storekeeper, who knew me, and others in the store who knew my mother's little boy (and who also knew my Miss Crawford!) laughed and called me back. Miss Crawford also laughed and looked down at me with so beautiful a smile that I was not even embarrassed. Which was rare for me.

Tom Mix, on his white horse. Actually, it was Tom Mix's hat, a shadow in the shadow of the hat, a kind of rocky background (which, again, was always moving) and the white horse. Tom Mix was a serial. Every Saturday, then, if memory serves, we left Tom Mix and some bleakly interchangeable girl in the most dreadful danger—or, rather, we left the hat and the shadow of the hat and the white horse: for the horse was not interchangeable and the serial could not have existed without it.

James Baldwin

Bob Adelman

A Harlem street scene in the early thirties. An adolescent Baldwin met the movies at the Lincoln on 135th Street.

The Last of the Mohicans: Randolph Scott (a kind of fifteenth-rate Gary Cooper) and Binnie Barnes (a kind of funky Geraldine Fitzgerald), Heather Angel (a somewhat more bewildered Olivia de Havilland) and Philip Reed (a precursor of Anthony Quinn). Philip Reed was the Indian, Uncas, whose savage, not to say slavish adoration of Miss Angel's fine blonde frame drives her over a cliff, headlong, to her death. She has chosen death before dishonor, which made perfect sense. The erring Uncas eventually pays for his misguided lust with his life, and a tremulous, wet-eyed, brave couple, Randolph Scott and Binnie Barnes, eventually, hand in hand, manage to make it out of the wilderness. Into America, or back to England, I really do not remember, and I don't suppose that it matters.

20,000 Years in Sing Sing: Spencer Tracy and Bette Davis. By this time, I had been taken in hand by a young white schoolteacher, a beautiful woman, very important to me. I was between ten and eleven. She had directed my first play and endured my first theatrical tantrums and had then decided to escort me into the world. She gave me books to read and talked to me about the books, and about the world: about Spain, for example, and Ethiopia, and Italy, and the German Third Reich; and took me to see plays and films, plays and films to which no one else would have dreamed of taking a ten-year-old boy. I loved her, of course, and absolutely, with a child's love; didn't understand half of what she said, but remembered it; and it stood me in good stead later. It is certainly partly because of her, who arrived in my terrifying life so soon, that I never really managed to hate white people—though, God knows, I have often wished to murder more than one or two. But Bill Miller—her name was Orilla, we called her Bill—was not white for me in the way, for example, that Joan Crawford was white, in the way that the landlords and the storekeepers and the cops and most of my teachers were white. She didn't baffle me that way and she never frightened me and she never lied to me. I never felt her pity, either, in spite of the fact that she sometimes brought us old clothes (because she worried about our winters) and cod-liver oil, especially for me, because I seemed destined, then, to be carried away by whooping cough.

I was a child, of course, and, therefore, unsophisticated. I don't seem ever to have had any innate need (or, indeed, any innate ability) to distrust people: and so I took Bill Miller as she was, or as she appeared to be to me. Yet, the difference between Miss Miller and other white people, white people as they lived in my imagination, and also as they were in life, had to have had a profound and bewildering effect on my mind. Bill Miller was not at all like the cops who had already beaten me up, she was not like the landlords who called me nigger, she was not like the storekeepers who laughed at me. I had found white people to be unutterably menacing, terrifying, mysterious—wicked: and

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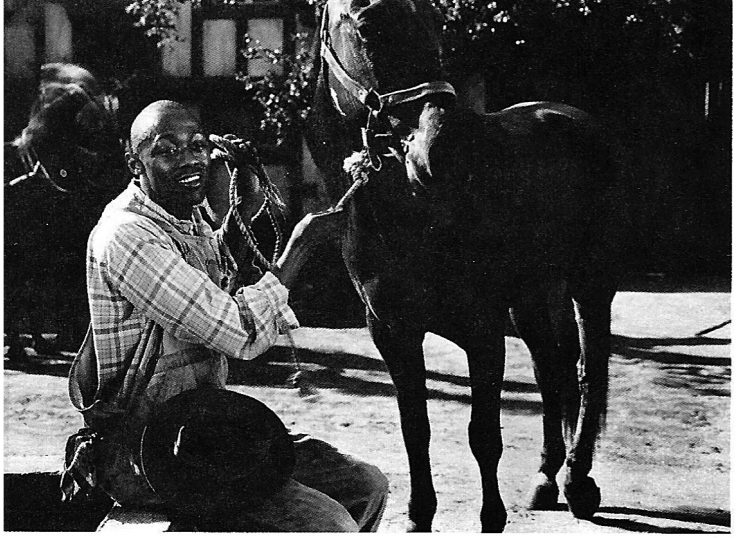

Stepin Fetchit in David Harum *(1934). Like Willie Best and Mantan Moreland, Fetchit represented a lie to life in Harlem.*

they were mysterious, in fact, to the extent that they were wicked: the unfathomable question being, precisely this one: what, under heaven, or beneath the sea, or in the catacombs of hell, could cause any people to act as white people acted? From Miss Miller, therefore, I began to suspect that white people did not act as they did because they were white, but for some other reason, and I began to try to locate and understand the reason. She, too, was treated like a nigger, especially by the cops, and she had no love for landlords.

My father said, during all the years I lived with him, that I was the ugliest boy he had ever seen, and I had absolutely no reason to doubt him. But it was not my father's hatred of *my* frog-eyes which hurt me, this hatred proving, in time, to be rather more resounding than real: I have my mother's eyes. When my father called me ugly, he was not attacking me so much as he was attacking my mother. (No doubt, he was also attacking my real, and unknown, father.) And I loved my mother. I knew that she loved me, and I sensed that she was paying an enormous price for me. I was a boy, and so I didn't really too much care that my father thought me hideous (so I said to myself—this judgment, nevertheless, was to have a decidedly terrifying effect on my life). But I thought that he must have been stricken blind (or was as mysteriously wicked as white people, a paralyzing thought) if he was unable to see that my mother was absolutely beyond any question the most beautiful woman in the world.

So, here, now, was Bette Davis, on that Saturday afternoon, in close-up, over a champagne glass, pop-eyes popping. I was astounded. I had caught my father, not in a lie, but in an infirmity. For, here, before me, after all, was a *movie star*: *white*: and in it she was white and a movie star, she was *rich*: and she was *ugly*. Out of bewilderment, out of loyalty to my mother, probably, and also because I sensed something menacing and unhealthy (for me, certainly) in the face on the screen, I gave Davis's skin the dead-white greenish cast of something crawling from under a rock, but I was held, just the same, by the tense intelligence of the forehead, the disaster of the lips: and when she moved, she moved just like a nigger. Eventually, from a hospital bed, she murders someone, and Tracy takes the weight, to Sing Sing. In his arms, Davis cries and cries, and the movie ends. "What's going to happen to her now?" I asked Bill Miller. "We don't know," said Bill, conveying to me, nevertheless, that she would probably never get over it, that people pay for what they do.

I had not yet heard Bessie Smith's *Why they call this place the Sing Sing?/Come stand here by this rock pile and listen to these hammers ring*, and it would be seven years before I would begin working for the railroad. It was to take a longer time than that before I would cry; a longer time than that before I would cry in anyone's arms; and a long long long long time before I would begin to realize what I myself was doing with my enormous eyes—or vice versa. This had nothing to do with Davis, the actress, or with all those hang-ups I didn't yet know I had: I had discovered that my infirmity might not be my doom: my infirmity, or infirmities, might be forced into weapons.

For, I was not only considered by my father to be ugly. I was considered by everyone to be "strange," including my poor mother, who didn't, however, beat me for it. Well, if I was "strange"—and I knew that I must be, otherwise people would not have treated me so strangely, and I would not have been so miserable—perhaps I could find a way to use my strangeness. A "strange" child, anyway, dimly and fearfully apprehends that the years are not likely to make him less strange. Therefore, if he wishes to live, he must calculate, and I knew that I had to live. I very much wanted my mother to be happy and to be proud of me, and I very much loved my brothers and my sisters, who, in a sense, were all I had. My father showed no favoritism, he did not beat me worse than the others because I was not his son. (I didn't know this then, anyway, none of the children did, and by the time we all found out, it became just one more detail of the peculiar journey we had made in company with each other.) I knew, too, that my mother depended on me. The eldest can be, God knows, as much a burden as a help, and is doomed to be something of a mystery for those growing up behind him—a mystery when not, indeed, an intolerable exasperation. *I*, nevertheless, was the oldest, a responsibility I did not intend to fail, and my first conscious calculation as to how to go about defeating the world's intentions for me and mine began on that Saturday afternoon in what we called *the movies*, but which was actually my first entrance into the cinema of my mind.

I read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* over and over and over again—this is the first book I can remember

having read—and then I read *A Tale of Two Cities*—over and over and over again. Bill Miller takes me to see *A Tale of Two Cities*, at the Lincoln, on 135th Street. I am twelve.

The film ends with this enormity sprawled across the screen:

I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and he that believeth in me shall never die.

I had lived with this text all my life, which made encountering it on the screen of the Lincoln Theater absolutely astounding: and I had lived with the people of *A Tale of Two Cities* for very nearly as long. I had no idea what *Two Cities* was really about, any more than I knew what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was really about, which was why I had read them both so obsessively: they had something to tell me. It was this particular child's way of circling around the question of what it meant to be a nigger. It was the reason that I was reading Dostoevski, a writer—or, rather, for me, a messenger—whom I would have had to understand, obviously, even less: my relentless pursuit of *Crime and Punishment* made my father (vocally) and my mother (silently) consider the possibility of brain fever. I was intrigued, but not misled, by the surface of these novels—Sydney Carton's noble renunciation of his life on the spectacular guillotine, Tom's forbearance before Simon Legree, the tracking down of Raskolnikov: the time of my time was to reduce all these images to the angel dancing on the edge of the junkie's needle: I did not believe in any of these people so much as I believed in their situation, which I suspected, dreadfully, to have something to do with my own.

In the novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, it had been Madame Defarge who most struck me. I recognized that unrelenting hatred, for it was all up and down my streets, and in my father's face and voice. The wine cask, *shattered like a walnut shell*, shattered every Saturday night on the corner of our street, and, yes, Dickens was right, the gutters turned a bright and then a rusty red. I understood the knitted registers as hope and fate, for I knew that everything (including my own name) had long been written in The Book: *you may run on a great long time but great God Almighty's going to cut you down!* I understood the meaning of the rose in the turban of Madame Defarge as she sits knitting in the wine shop, the flower in the headdress meant to alert the neighborhood to the presence of a spy. We lived by such signals, and long before it was safe to say *there is a rose in Spanish Harlem*!

When, at last, in the film, the people rise and fill the streets and alleys and hurl themselves onto the drawbridge of the Bastille, I was tremendously stirred and frightened. I did not really know who these people were, or why they were in the streets—they were white: and a white mob can be in no way reassuring to a black boy (even though, or if, he cannot say why). If, in the novel, it was Madame Defarge who most held me, in the film two images and one moment stand out, even from this distance. The first is a long climb up an outside staircase, in Paris, when Lucie Manette and Mr. Lorry and Ernest Defarge go to retrieve Lucie's father, Dr. Manette: for I knew about staircases. The second is when the carriage of the Marquis races headlong through a provincial village. We are confronted with the speeding wheels of the carriage, the relentless hooves of the horses, and a small, running, ragged boy, trying to get out of the way. He is knocked down, he is run over, he is killed: and I knew something about that. The moment that most stands out, for me, is that moment in the tumbrel, near the end of the film, when the seamstress (Isabel Jewell) recognizes that Sydney Carton (Ronald Colman) is dying in his friend's stead. I knew nothing about *that*, but I had been taught *greater love hath no man than this*, and something in me believed it. Yet, when Bill whispered to me, during the scene of the storming of the Bastille, "Every time somebody drops from the drawbridge, they die," though I watched the people dropping off the drawbridge like so many dead cockroaches being swept into the dust pan, I was also aware that Bill was not telling me that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer was murdering all these people, any more than that guillotine was really going to chop off Ronald Colman's head. The guillotine was going to chop off *Sydney Carton's* head: my first director was instructing me in the discipline and power of make-believe.

I understood, as Bill had intended me to, something of revolution—understood, that is, something of the universal and inevitable human ferment which explodes into what is called a revolution. *Revolution*: the word had a solemn, dreadful ring: what was going on in Spain was a *revolution*. It was said that Roosevelt had saved America: from a *revolution*. Revolution was the only hope of the American working class—the *proletariat*; and world-wide revolution was the only hope of the world. I could understand (or, rather, accept) all this, as it were, negatively. I could not see where I fit in this formulation, and I did not see where blacks fit. I don't think that I ever dared pose this question to Bill, partly because I hadn't yet really accepted, or understood, that *I* was black and also because I knew (and didn't want her to know, although, of course, she did) how much my father distrusted and disliked her. My father was certainly a proletarian, but I had been sent downtown often to pay his union dues, and I knew how much he hated these greasy, slimy men—also proletarians—whom he called, quite rightly, robbers.

In the film, I was not overwhelmed by the guillotine. The guillotine had been very present for me in the novel because I already wanted, and for very good reasons, to lop off heads. But: once begun, how to distinguish one head from another, and

how, where, and for what reason, would the process stop? Beneath the resonance of the word, *revolution*, thundered the word, *revenge*. But: *vengeance is mine, saith the Lord*: a hard saying, the identity of *the Lord* becoming, with the passage of time, either a private agony or an abstract question. And, to put it as simply as it can be put, unless one can conceive of (and endure) an abstract life, there can be no abstract questions. A question is a threat, the door which slams shut, or swings open: on another threat.

I was haunted, for example, by Alexandre Manette's document, in *A Tale of Two Cities*, describing the murder of a peasant boy—who, dying, speaks: *I say, we were so robbed and hunted and were made so poor, that our father told us it was a dreadful thing to bring a child into this world and that what we should most pray for, was that our women might be barren and our miserable race die out! (I had never before,* observes Dr. Manette, *seen the sense of being oppressed burst forth like a fire.)*

Dickens has not seen it at all. The wretched of the earth do not decide to become extinct, they resolve, on the contrary, to multiply: life is their only weapon against life, life is all that they have.

Bette Davis in Dark Victory *(1939). Her odd beauty on the screen was a reassurance to young Baldwin.*

Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills

This is why the dispossessed will never be convinced (though some may be coerced) by the population-control programs of the civilized.

But I was haunted, too, by the fact that it is Dr. Manette's testimony, written in prison, and recuperated by Ernest Defarge upon the storming of the Bastille, which dooms his son-in-law to death. The Defarges seize and hide this document in order to use it against the son-in-law at the latter's trial: at which trial, Dr. Manette is chief witness for the defense—or, in other words, in fact, his son-in-law's only hope.

Manette wrote his testimony in agony and silence, never expecting to see his daughter again, and unable, of course, to imagine that his daughter would marry one of the descendants of the house which had condemned him to a living death. His testimony ends: *them and their descendants, to the last of their race — I — denounce them to heaven and to earth*. His son-in-law is the descendant of the "race" which had imprisoned him, and the "last" of that race, denounced by him, is flesh of his flesh, his granddaughter. Which connected for me, horribly, with the testimony of Madame Defarge, sister of the murdered boy: *that brother was my brother, that father was my father, those dead are my dead and that summons to answer for all those things descends to me!* Her husband reluctantly agrees that this is so, whereupon Madame Defarge says, *Then tell wind and fire where to stop, but don't tell me!*

I understood *that*: I had seen it in the face, heard it in the voice of many a black man or woman, sweeping the pavement, wrestling with the garbage cans, men and women whose children were dying faster than those MGM extras were dropping from the drawbridge.

I feared, feared—like a thief in the night, as one of my brothers would put it—to connect all this with my father and mother and everyone I knew, and with myself, and to connect all this with black Uncle Tom: no more than I had wished to be that fleeing fugitive on that moving train did I desire to endure his destiny or meet his end. Uncle Tom really believed *vengeance is mine, saith the Lord*, for he believed in the Lord, as I flattered myself I did not: this inconvenient faith (described, furthermore, by a white woman) obscured the fact that Tom allowed himself to be murdered for refusing to disclose the road taken by a runaway slave. Because Uncle Tom would not take vengeance into his own hands, he was not a hero for me. Heroes, as far as I could then see, were white, and not merely because of the movies but because of the land in which I lived, of which movies were simply a reflection: I despised and feared those heroes because they *did* take vengeance into their own hands. They thought that vengeance was theirs to take. This difficult coin did not cease to spin, it had neither heads nor tails: for what white people took into their hands could scarcely even be called vengeance, it was something less and something more. The Scottsboro boys, for example—for the Scotts-

boro Case has begun—were certainly innocent of anything requiring vengeance. My father's youngest son by his first marriage, nine years older than I, who had vanished from our lives, might have been one of those boys, now being murdered by my fellow Americans on the basis of the rape charge delivered by two white whores: and I was reading Herndon's *Let Me Live*. Yes. I understood *that*: my countrymen were my enemy, and I had already begun to hate them from the bottom of my heart.

Angelo Herndon was a young, black labor organizer in the Deep South, railroaded to prison, who lived long enough, at least, to write a book about it—the George Jackson of the era. No one resembling him, or anyone resembling any of the Scottsboro Boys, nor anyone resembling my father, has yet appeared on the American cinema scene.

It is not entirely true that no one from the world I knew had yet made an appearance on the American screen: there were, for example, Stepin Fetchit and Willie Best and Mantan Moreland, all of whom, rightly or wrongly, I loathed. It seemed to me that they lied about the world I knew, and debased it, and certainly I did not know anybody like them—as far as I could tell; for it is also possible that their comic, bug-eyed terror contained the truth concerning a terror by which I hoped never to be engulfed.

Yet, I had no reservations at all concerning the terror of the black janitor in *They Won't Forget*. I think that it was a black actor named Clinton Rosemond who played this part, and he looked a little like my father. He is terrified because a young white girl, in this small Southern town, has been raped and murdered, and her body has been found on the premises of which he is the janitor. (Lana Turner, in her first movie, is the raped and murdered girl, which is, perhaps, a somewhat curious beginning for so gold-plated a career.) The role of the janitor is small, yet the man's face hangs in my memory until today: and the film's icy brutality both scared me and strengthened me. The Southern politician (Claude Rains) needs an issue on which to be reelected. He decides, therefore, that to pin the rape and murder of the white girl on a black man is insufficiently sensational. He very coldly frames a white Northern schoolteacher for this crime, and brings about his death at the hands of a lynch mob. (And I knew that this was exactly what would have happened to Bill, if such a mob had ever got its hands on her.) Unlike the later *Ox-Bow Incident*, in which a similar lynching is partially redeemed by the reading of a letter, which, presumably, will cause the members of the mob to repent the horror of what they have done and resolve to become better men and women, and also unlike the later *Intruder in the Dust*, which suggests the same hopeful improbability, *They Won't Forget* ends with the teacher dead and the politician triumphantly reelected. As he watches the widow walk down the courthouse steps, he mutters, seeming, almost, to stifle a yawn, *I wonder if he really did it, after all*.

And, yes: I was beginning to understand *that*.

Sylvia Sidney was the only American film actress who reminded me of a colored girl, or woman—which is to say that she was the only American film actress who reminded me of reality. All of the others, without exception, were white, and, even when they moved me (like Margaret Sullavan or Bette Davis or Carole Lombard) they moved me from that distance. Some instinct caused me profoundly to distrust the sense of life they projected: this sense of life could certainly never, in any case, be used by me, and, while *His* eye might be on the sparrow, mine had to be on the hawk. And, similarly, while I admired Edward G. Robin-

Sylvia Sidney in Fury *(1936). "The only American film actress who reminded me of reality."*

Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills

Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills

The mob in Fury. *Fritz Lang located his mob not so much in America as in Nazi Germany.*

son and James Cagney (and, on a more demanding level, Fredric March), the only actor of the era with whom I identified was Henry Fonda. I was not alone. A black friend of mine, after seeing Henry Fonda in *The Grapes of Wrath*, swore that Fonda had colored blood. You could tell, he said, by the way Fonda walked down the road at the end of the film: *white men don't walk like that!* and he imitated Fonda's stubborn, patient, wide-legged hike away from the camera. My reaction to Sylvia Sidney was certainly due, in part, to the kind of film she appeared in during that era—*Fury*; *Mary Burns, Fugitive*; *You and Me*; *Street Scene* (I was certain, even, that I knew the meaning of the title of a film she made with Gene Raymond, which I never saw, *Behold My Wife*). It was almost as though she and I had a secret: she seemed to know something I knew. *Every street in New York ends in a river*: this is the legend which begins the film, *Dead End*, and I was enormously grateful for it. I had never thought of that before. Sylvia Sidney, facing a cop in this film, pulling her black hat back from her forehead: *One of you lousy cops gave me that*. She was always being beaten up, victimized, weeping, and she should have been drearier than Tom Mix's girl friends. But I always believed her—in a way, she reminded me of Bill, for I had seen Bill facing hostile cops. Bill took us on a picnic downtown once, and there was supposed to be ice cream waiting for us at a police station. The cops didn't like Bill, didn't like the fact that we were colored kids, and didn't want to give up the ice cream. I don't remember anything Bill said. I just remember her face as she stared at the cop, clearly intending

to stand there until the ice cream all over the world melted or until the earth's surface froze, and she got us our ice cream, saying, *Thank you*, I remember, as we left. *You Only Live Once* was the most powerful movie I had seen until that moment. The only other film to hit me as hard, at that time of my life, was *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky*, which, for me, had not been about white people. Similarly, while *20,000 Years in Sing Sing* had concerned the trials of a finally somewhat improbable white couple, *You Only Live Once* came much much closer to home.

It is the top of 1937. I am not yet thirteen.

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Fury, MGM, 1936, is Lang's first American film. It is meant to be a study of mob violence, on which level it is indignant, sincere, and inept. Since the mob separates the lovers almost at the beginning of the film, the film works as a love story only intermittently, and to the extent that one responds to the lovers (Sylvia Sidney and Spencer Tracy). It is an exceedingly uneasy and uneven film, with both the lovers and the mob placed, really, in the German Third Reich, which Lang has not so much fled as furiously repudiated, and to which he is still reacting. (The railroad station at which the lovers separate is heavy with menace, and the train which carries Sidney away to go to work in another town is rather like the train to a bloody destination unknown.) Lang's is the *fury* of the film: but his grasp of the texture of American life is still extremely weak: he has not yet really left Germany. His fury, nevertheless, manages to convey something of the idle, aimless, compulsive wickedness of idle, terrified, aimless people, who can come together only as a mob: but his hatred of these people also makes them, at last, unreal. God knows what Lang had already seen, in Germany.

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By the time of *You Only Live Once*, Lang had found his American feet. He never succeeded quite so brilliantly again. Considering the speed with which we moved from the New Deal to World War II, to Yalta, to the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine, to Korea, and the House Un-American Activities Committee, this may not be his fault.

Lang's concern, or obsession, was with the fact and the effect of human loneliness, and the ways in which we are all responsible for the creation, and the fate, of the isolated monster: whom we isolate because we recognize him as living within us. This is what his great German film, *M*, which launched Peter Lorre, is all about. In the American context, there being no way for him to get to the *nigger*, he could use only that other American prototype, the criminal, *le gangster*. The premise of *You Only Live Once* is that Eddie Taylor (Henry Fonda) is an ex-convict who wants to go "straight": but the society will not allow him to live down, or redeem, his criminal past. This apparently banal situation is thrust upon us with so heavy a hand that one is forced—as I was, even so long ago—to wonder if one is resisting the film or resisting the truth. But, however one may wish to defend oneself against Lang's indictment of the small, faceless people, always available for any public ceremony and absent forever from any private one, who *are* society, one is left defenseless before his study of the result, which is the isolation and the doom of the lovers.

The film has a kind of claustrophobic physicality—Sidney is first seen, for example, behind a desk, trapped, and Lang forces us to concentrate on her maneuvers to free herself, smiling all the way. (She's trapped behind her desk by a telephone and by an apple vendor who has come to City Hall, where Sidney works, to complain that policemen eat his apples for free.) The first reunion of the lovers takes place with bars between them: it takes a moment before they realize that the gate is open, the man is being set free. There is a marvelous small moment in the flop house, with Fonda pacing the room the way he paced the cell, and pausing at the window to listen to the Salvation Army Band outside, singing, *if you love your mother, meet her in the skies*. I cannot imagine any native white American daring to use, so laconically, a banality so nearly comic in order to capture so deep a distress.

The genuine indignation which informs this film is a quality which was very shortly to disappear out of the American cinema, and severely to be menaced in American life. In a way, we were all niggers in the thirties. I do not know if that really made us more friendly with each other—at bottom, I doubt that, for more would remain of that friendliness today—but it was harder then, and riskier, to attempt a separate peace, and benign neglect was not among our possibilities. The Okies, of *The Grapes of Wrath*, were still crossing the plains in their jalopy and had not yet arrived in California, there, every single one of them, to encounter running water, and to become cops. Neither Steinbeck nor Dos Passos had yet said, *my country, right or wrong*, nor did anyone suppose that they ever could—but they did; and Hemingway was as vocal concerning the Spanish revolution as he was to be silent concerning the Cuban one.

There is that moment in the film, in prison, when Fonda whispers to Sidney, through jail-house glass, *Get me a gun*. Sidney says, *I can't get you a gun. You'll kill somebody!* and Fonda says, *What do you think they're going to do to me?*

I understood *that*: it was a real question. I was living with that question.

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Dead End, on the other hand, left me cold, and so did *Street Scene*, for the same reason: my streets

were funkier and more dangerous than that. I had seen the gangster, Baby-Face Martin (Humphrey Bogart), in *my* streets, with his one-hundred-dollar suits, and his silk shirts, and his hat: sometimes he was a pimp and sometimes he was a preacher and often he was both: but Baby-Face always had the same taste in women, boys, and cars. I knew no one like the heroine, Drina (Sylvia Sidney), except certain high-yellow bitches, whose concern for their younger brother, if they had any concern, would long before have forced them to hit the block, hit the road, or hit a clean old banker, and steal the keys to the long old highway; or, in other words, the severity of the social situation which *Dead End* so romanticizes (somewhat like its direct descendant, *West Side Story*) utterly precludes the innocence of its heroine. Much closer to the truth are the gangster, his broken mother, and his broken girl—yes: I had seen *that*. The script is unable to face the fact that it is merely another version of that brutal fantasy known as the American success story: this helpless dishonesty is revealed by the script's resolution. I was by no means certain that I approved of the hero's decision to inform on Baby-Face, to turn him over to the police, and bring about his death. In my streets, we never called the cops, and whoever turned anyone in to the cops was a pariah. I did not believe, though the film insists on it, that the hero (Joel McCrea) turned in the gangster in order to save the children. I had never seen any children saved that way. In my own experience, on the contrary, and not only because I was watching Bill, I had observed that those who really wished to save the children became themselves, immediately, the target of the police. I could believe—though the film pretends that this consideration never entered the hero's mind—that the hero turned in the gangster in order to collect the reward money: that reward money which will allow the hero and heroine to escape from the stink of the children: for I had certainly seen attempts at *that*.

In any case, the happy resolution of *Dead End* could mean nothing to me, since, even with some money, black people could move only into black neighborhoods: which is not to be interpreted as meaning that we wished to move into white neighborhoods. We wished, merely, to be free to move. At the time that I am speaking of we had not yet even begun to move across the river, into the Bronx.

Paul Stewart, Canada Lee in the Orson Welles stage version of Native Son *(1941). Lee as Bigger Thomas awed Baldwin.*

Museum of the City of New York

Bill takes me to see my first play, the Orson Welles production of *Macbeth*, with an all-black cast, at the Lafayette Theater, on 132nd Street and Seventh Avenue, in Harlem.

I do not remember if I had already read *Macbeth*. My impression is that I read the play when Bill told me she was taking me to see it. In any case, before the curtain rose, I knew the play by heart.

I don't think that the name, *Shakespeare*, meant very much to me in those years. I was not yet intimidated by the name—that was to come later. I had read a play which took place in Scotland. Bill had not warned me—she may not have known—that Welles had transposed the play to Haiti.

I am still about twelve or thirteen. I can be fairly certain about all this, because my life changed so violently when I entered the church, and I entered the church around the age of fourteen. When I entered the church, I ceased going to the theater. It took me awhile to realize that I was working in one.

There is an enormous difference between the stage and the screen: but I may never be able to be articulate as concerns this difference because the first time I ever really saw black actors at work was on the stage: and it is important to emphasize that the people I was watching were black, like me. Nothing that I had seen before had prepared me for this—which is a melancholy comment indeed, but I cannot be blamed for an ignorance which an entire republic had deliberately inculcated.

The distance between oneself—the audience—and a screen performer is an absolute: a paradoxical absolute, masquerading as intimacy. No one, for example, will ever really know whether Katharine Hepburn or Bette Davis or Humphrey Bogart or Spencer Tracy or Clark Gable—or John Wayne—can, or could, really act, or not, nor does anyone care: acting is not what they are required to do. Their acting ability, far from being what at-

tracts their audience, can often be what drives their audience away. One does not go to see them act: one goes to watch them *be*. One does not go to see Humphrey Bogart, *as Sam Spade*: one goes to see Sam Spade, *as Humphrey Bogart*. But, *no one*, I read somewhere, a long time ago, *makes his escape personality black*. That the movie star is an "escape" personality indicates one of the irreducible dangers to which the moviegoer is exposed: the danger of surrendering to the corroboration of one's fantasies as they are thrown back from the screen. The danger is as great for the performer: Bette Davis may have longed, all these years, to play Mrs. Alving, in *Ghosts*, and Spencer Tracy may have carried with him to the grave an unfulfilled *King Lear*—nobody was about to let them try it, for fear that their public would feel themselves betrayed. This is one of the reasons that Joan Crawford, for example, doesn't like the film *Rain*, in which she starred. God knows that it's not a very good picture, but Crawford didn't write the abysmal script. She made the mistake, and very honorably, after all, of trying to be Miss Sadie Thompson instead of Miss Joan Crawford, and the kids didn't like that at all.

For the tension in the theater is a very different, and very particular tension: this tension between the real and the imagined *is* the theater, and this is why the theater will always remain a necessity. One is not in the presence of shadows, but responding to one's flesh and blood: in the theater, we are re-creating each other. Clearly, now, when speaking of the theater, I am not referring to those desperate and debilitating commercial ventures on which Broadway embarks each season, or those grim "revivals" of stillborn plays of which London is so fond, or those "adaptations" of American monstrosities which have been the rage of Paris for so long. Nor, in the present instance, is the term, "one's flesh and blood" meant to refer, merely, to the spectacle of a black boy seeing, for the first time in his life, living black actors on a living stage: we are *all* each other's flesh and blood.

In the darkened Lafayette Theater—that moment when the house lights dim in the theater is not at all like the dimming of the house lights in the movies—I watched the narrow, horizontal ribbon of light which connects the stage curtain to the floor of the stage, and which also separates them. That narrow ribbon of light then contains a mystery. That mystery may contain the future—you are, yourself, suspended, as mortal as that ribbon. No one can possibly know what is about to happen: it is happening, each time, for the first time, for the only time. For this reason, although I did not know this, I had never before, in the movies, been aware of the audience: in the movies, we knew what was going to happen, and, if we wanted to, we could stay there all afternoon, seeing it happen over and over again.

But I was aware of the audience now. Everyone seemed to be waiting, as I was. The curtain rose.

Between three and four years later, that is, around the time that I was seventeen, my best friend, Emile, took me to a movie at the Irving Place Theater, a Russian movie, since America

Opening night of all-black Macbeth, *directed by Welles in 1936. The first time at a play for Baldwin. Maurice Ellis starred.*

Research Center of the Federal Theatre Project at George Mason University & The Library of Congress

and Russia were allies then. My friend is a Jew—an American Jew, of Spanish descent: he was then, and is today, one of the most honest and honorable people I have ever known. He took me to the movie because he was trying to help me leave the church. I had not been to a film, or a theater, from the time of my conversion, which came hard upon the heels of *Macbeth*.

At this time of my life, Emile was the only friend I had who knew to what extent my ministry tormented me. I knew that I could not stay in the pulpit. I could not make my peace with that particular lie—a lie, in any case, for me. I did not want to become Baby-Face Martin—I could see that coming, and, indeed, it demanded no spectacular perception, since I found myself surrounded by what I was certain to become. But neither did I know how to leave—to jump: it could not be explained to my brothers and sisters, or my mother, and my father had begun his descent into the valley. Emile took me to this film, of which I remember only a close-up of a tambourine. I played the tambourine, in church: the tambourine on the screen might as well have been Gabriel's trumpet. I collapsed, weeping, terrified, and Emile led me out. He walked me up to Herald Square. It was night. He talked to me; he tried to make me see something—tried to do something only a friend can do: and challenged me, thus:

Even if what I was preaching was gospel, I had no right to preach it if I no longer believed it. To stay in the church merely because I was afraid of leaving it was unutterably far beneath me, and too despicable a cowardice for him to support in any friend of his. Therefore, on the coming Sunday, he would buy two tickets to a Broadway matinee and meet me on the steps of the 42nd Street Library, at two o'clock in the afternoon. He knew that I spent all day Sunday in church—the point, precisely, of the challenge. If I were not on the steps of the library (in the bookshelves of which so much of my trouble had begun!) then he would be ashamed of me and never speak to me again, and I would be ashamed of myself.

(I cannot resist observing that this still seems to me a quite extraordinary confrontation between two adolescents, one white and one black: but, then, I had never forgotten Bill's quiet statement, when I went down to her house on 12th Street to tell her that I had been "saved" and would not be going to the movies, or the theater anymore—which meant that I would not be seeing her anymore: *I've lost a lot of respect for you.* Perhaps, in the intervening time, I had lost a lot of respect for myself.)

But beneath all this, as under a graveyard pallor, or the noonday sun, lay the fact that the leap demanded that I commit myself to the clear impossibility of becoming a writer, and attempting to save my family that way. I do not think I said this. I think Emile knew it.

I had hoped for a reprieve, hoped, on the marked Sunday, to get away, unnoticed: but I was the "young" Brother Baldwin, and I sat in the front row, and the pastor did not begin his sermon until about a quarter past one. Well. At one-thirty, I—*tiptoed*—out. The further details of my departure do not concern us here: that was how I left the church.

I am fairly certain that the matinee, that Sunday, was *Native Son* (also directed by Orson Welles) at the St. James Theater. We were in the balcony, and I remember standing up, abruptly and unwisely, when the play ended, and nearly falling headlong from the balcony to the pit. I did not know that I had been hit so hard: I will not forget Canada Lee's performance as long as I live.

Canada Lee was Bigger Thomas, but he was also Canada Lee: his physical presence, like the physical presence of Paul Robeson, gave me the right to live. He was not at the mercy of my imagination, as he would have been, on the screen: he was on the stage, in flesh and blood, and I was, therefore, at the mercy of *his* imagination.

For that long-ago *Macbeth* had both terrified and exhilarated me. I knew enough to know that the actress (the colored lady!) who played Lady Macbeth might very well be a janitor, or a janitor's wife, when the play closed, or when the curtain came down. Macbeth was a nigger, just like me, and I saw the witches in church, every Sunday, and all up and down the block, all week long, and Banquo's face was a familiar face. At the same time, the majesty and torment on that stage were real: indeed they revealed the play, *Macbeth*. They *were* those people and that torment was a torment I recognized, those were real daggers, it was real blood, and those crimes resounded and compounded, as real crimes do: I did not have to ask, *what happens to them now?* And, if niggers have rhythm, these niggers had the beat—*tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow*, and—*thou shalt be King hereafter!* It is not accidental that I was carrying around the plot of a play in my head, and looking, with a new wonder (and a new terror) at everyone around me, when I suddenly found myself on the floor of the church, crying holy unto the Lord. Flesh and blood had proved to be too much for flesh and blood.

For, they were themselves, these actors—these people were themselves. They could *be* Macbeth only because they were themselves: my first real apprehension of the mortal challenge. Here, nothing corroborated any of my fantasies: flesh and blood was being challenged by flesh and blood. It is said that the camera cannot lie, but rarely do we allow it to do anything else, since the camera sees what you point it at: the camera sees what you want it to see. The language of the camera is the language of our dreams. ★

James Baldwin's works include *Nobody Knows My Name*, *Another Country*, and *If Beale Street Could Talk*. The present essay will appear in somewhat different form in *The Devil Finds Work*, to be published this month by Dial Press.

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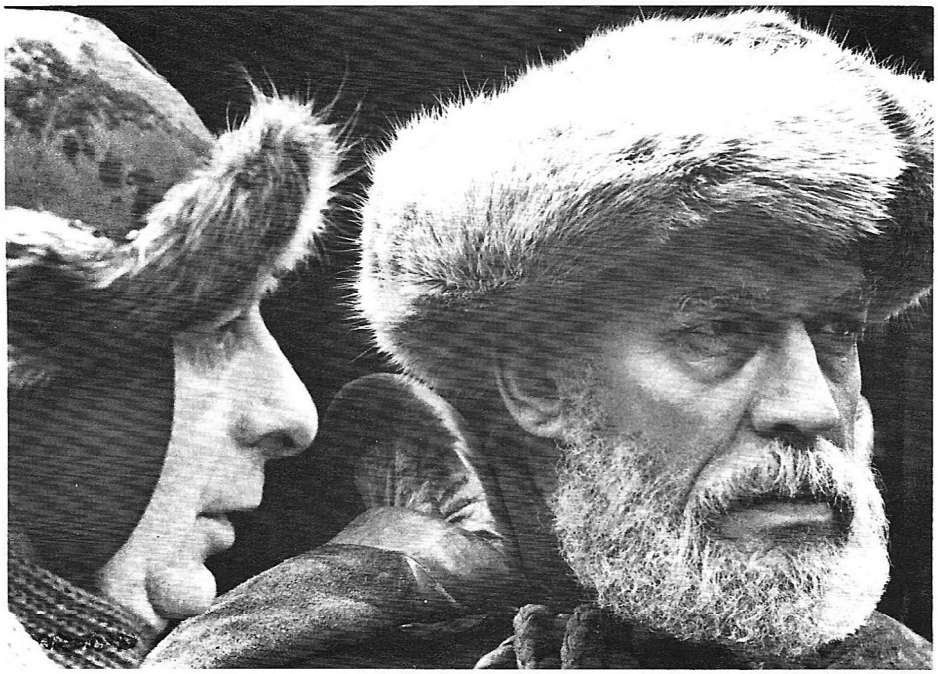

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rtmüller

"Foreign films" are back in style. This Italian director is mainly responsible.

Lillian Gerard

"It is every Italian director's dream to be loved in America," Lina Wertmüller confided to a friend a little over a year ago during her first trip to this country. At that time the American public might have mistaken Wertmüller for the name of a German beer; it might have thought *Love and Anarchy* a Bicentennial musical, and *The Seduction of Mimi* another pornographic French movie. Now it knows *Swept Away* to be a sophisticated comedy, and the title an apt description of the way the public, the press, and the critics have embraced the director on her reentry into the New York film scene with her latest film, *Seven Beauties*.

With her sudden success, a rush of publishers, publicists, interviewers, and photographers have preempted Wertmüller's time; the Shah of Iran has even made her a tempting offer to organize a film studio in Tehran. Yet, on her recent visit to New York, she remained interested in whoever came to her seventh floor suite at the Hotel Pierre; she listened attentively and responded warmly, as curious about her visitors as they were about her, because Wertmüller lacks the sense of self-importance which so often accompanies celebrity.

Just as the others had reasons to see Wertmüller, I had reasons of my own. When we met a year ago, she had given me the script of *Seven Beauties* to read, and although I considered it literature, I was unable to envision it as a film. Now I wanted to congratulate her and to let her know that I was personally grateful for what she had done for the reputation of the foreign film. It seemed to me that she had restored foreign film to the status it once held. Beginning in the 1920s, the European film was known for its quality, found in the expressionistic German film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the Russian epic *Potemkin*, and the satirical French *A nous la liberté*, all films original in treatment, all characteristic of their particular cultures.

I do not mean to imply that foreign films were ever widely popular. They were patronized only by "intellectuals" who went to the Cameo Theater on 42nd Street to escape "Hollywood" entertainment, especially in the mid-serious 1930s when I first became involved with French movies. I worked with Jean Lenauer, a film "theorist" who was the Paris editor of the esoteric British film monthly *Close-Up*. Shortly after arriving in this country, he had the improbable notion of converting the legitimate John Golden Theater, closed during the Depression, into a foreign film movie house. It contained no fewer than eight hundred sets, most of the time unfilled, which led *Variety* to refer to it as a "sure seater." One was sure to get a seat.

It was my job to fill those seats. I tried just about everything to appeal to a larger audience. I dropped the

line "With English Subtitles" from the ads in the hope that the uninitiated might assume the films to be in English. I wanted to attract people who had never before seen a foreign film. I also began to quote the enthusiastic critics, a practice I borrowed from the Broadway plays. I started the screening syndrome. One distributor, Ilya Lopert, had a screening room no one could afford to rent, so I used it to show pictures like *Mayerling* to people in the arts such as Daniel Frohman, Katharine Cornell, Fredric March, Lillian Gish, Basil Rathbone, Katharine Hepburn, and even Helen Keller. All provided me with ecstatic comments which I boldly advertised to bait additional customers.

Armed with only a handful of photographs and a small bit of information, I tried to arouse the curiosity of the public. The paucity of material available led me to bury myself in the archives of foreign newspapers and magazines, to translate what facts I could find, to write lengthy articles for *The New York Times*, and to prepare erudite program notes for the public—what public we had in those days.

It was my objective to make Pagnol and Duvivier familiar names to Americans at a time when the auteur concept was unknown here, and, frankly, I got no help from the auteurs themselves. With the exception of Renoir, none of the directors abroad ever answered my importunate letters, and they seemed quite unconcerned with the success or failure of their pictures here.

In spite of this indifference, we purveyors of foreign films sweated over every decision. Should "Dirty Jew" in the dialogue of *Grand Illusion* be translated on the screen or would it offend the audience in that sensitive time? Should we placate the censor and remove the scene in *Whirlpool* in which a doctor tells a wife that her husband, who survived an auto crash, will be impotent? Should we remove the frontal nudity of ten-year-old boys in *Generals Without Buttons* or would the picture lose its charm? No detail was too small to escape attention, for we were a hardy band of distributors, exhibitors, publicists, and subtitle writers, at most a dozen, scratching out a living. We were working as much for love, because foreign films, while not really profitable, were intellectually seductive.

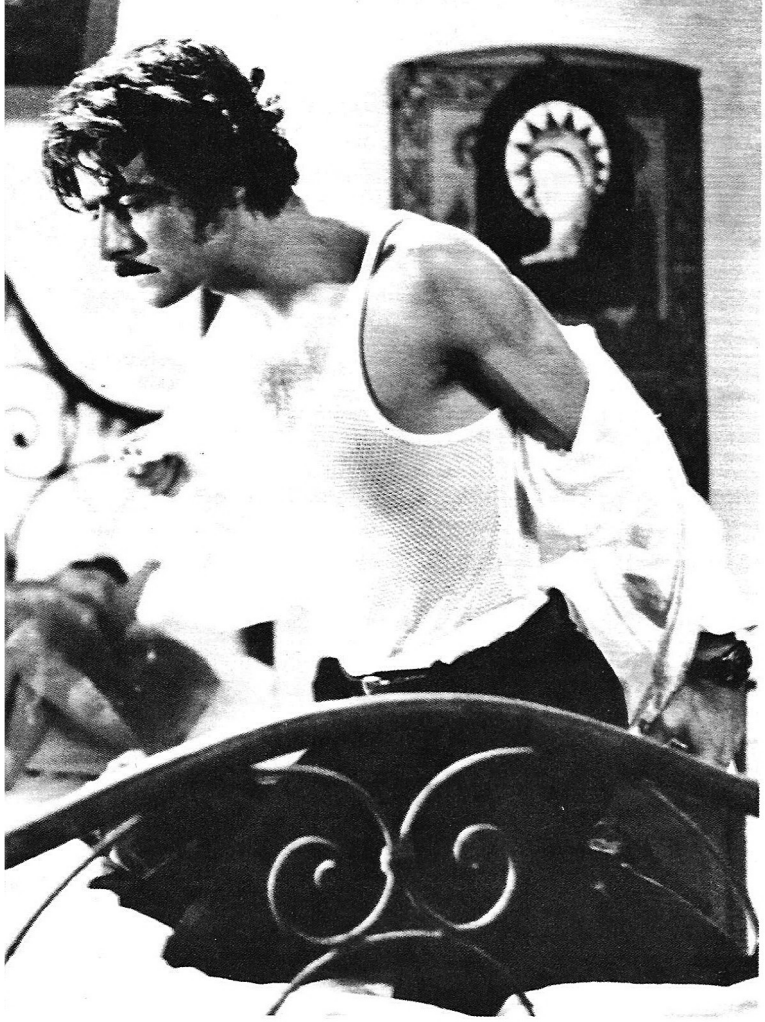
Even critics were thrilled by the daring themes these pictures explored: the trauma of childhood in *La Maternelle*, schizophrenia in *The Eternal Mask*, religious irreverence in *Carnival in Flanders*, class distinctions in *Grand Illusion*, the effects of a woman's aging in *Carnet de bal*, cuckoldry in *The Baker's Wife*, and a love/hate relationship in *The Human Beast*. Such provocative subjects once led critic Frank Nugent of *The New York Times* to chide Hollywood for its vapid pictures. In self-defense, Samuel Goldwyn, David O. Selznick, and Darryl Zanuck wrote angry letters to the *Times* in which they cited the "better" American pictures such as *A Star Is Born*, *Dodsworth*, *The Informer*, and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, and accused the critic of being partial to foreign films. In the debate, everyone seemed to forget that only the best foreign films ever crossed the ocean, and that the lesser films, imitative of Hollywood, were not exported.

The American films of that time were produced in bulk and were shown all over the world. In Europe, these films were dubbed and became as popular as American jazz. By contrast, the imported European pictures were undubbed and only a coterie of intellectuals eager to submit to subtitles patronized them. It was this same small, articulate following which made the foreign film a "succès d'estime" in major cities such as Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Washington, Cleveland, Chicago, and San Francisco.

During the war years, there was a total blackout of foreign films. As we really were hungry for them, it was a relief when, not long after VE day, the French sent us the epic *Children of Paradise*, made during the Occupation to prove the undying artistry of the French and their belief in the dignity of true love, with Arletty symbolizing la belle France and her lover, Jean-Louis Barrault, groping for her in a surging, insensitive crowd.

In 1946, the Italians revitalized the entire foreign film scene. The works of the Neorealists shocked us into a recognition of what we knew was the chaos of Italy during the war. We saw in Rossellini's *Open City* and De Sica's *Shoeshine* the suffering of civilians, and even of children. We were overjoyed to have these films, which reflected what we had learned from the returning GI's, and they made us weep.

The years which followed were



In Wertmüller, beds are sometimes battlefields. To a tango, a grim Elena Fiore and Giancarlo Giannini square off.

Helaine Messer

The director in New York: From TV commercials to Fellini's assistant on 8½ to stunning acclaim for her latest film.

rich. The sphere of film influence, ricocheting from one country to another in the 1950s and 1960s, moved from Italy to Great Britain, from Japan to India, from Sweden to the Eastern European countries. We came to know René Clément, Kurosawa, Satyajit Ray, Bergman, Fellini, Lindsay Anderson, Jan Kadar, and others. The New Wave introduced Resnais, Truffaut, Godard; then came the young Italian filmmakers, such as Bertolucci, Pontecorvo, and Petri.

Lately there have been few quality imports, with exceptions like *Last Tango in Paris* or *Amarcord*. Instead, we have had a spate of ordinary sex movies, with some in soft focus, and this is a sad moment for foreign films. Having nurtured them here in America, it dismays me to see how they have degenerated in the 1970s from being largely thought-provoking to sexually titillating. Could any one of my colleagues—Arthur Mayer, Joe Burstyn, Irvin Shapiro, Edward Kingsley, Duncan McGregor—have envisioned Lincoln Center as a setting for the hardcore pornographic film *Exhibition*, chosen by the New York Film Festival?

Now that American films have become so respected, and films from abroad less so, it makes us pause when we find a foreign filmmaker suddenly becoming a phenomenon in our midst. I refer, of course, to Lina Wertmüller, five of whose pictures have been shown in two successive years, and who, without benefit of a cult, has built a devoted following. Why?

My own theory is that the foreign film audience still exists, and that, more than ever, it craves a good import of substance with morals and mores unlike our own. It also has a need to experience a new style, a new vision, to come upon these things unexpectedly, because there is nothing more satisfying than the sense of discovery. Wertmüller has given the audience this opportunity.

Then there is Wertmüller's humor. There are so few comedies today, and the audience longs for pictures such as *Divorce—Italian Style* and *Big Deal on Madonna Street*, comedies notable for their humanity. So, too, the films of Wertmüller have still another dimension; they are hilariously sad comic-tragedies.

Of all Wertmüller's work, *Seven Beauties* is the most developed stylistically and the most philosophical. It tells us that man is a child who refuses to grow up, and unless he

does he will be destroyed. Pasqualino, the Neapolitan survivor of World War II, has no ideals, no raison d'être other than to defend himself in the only way he can; he wants merely to propagate.

Would a man make this film, I wonder? Would a man show another man as a coward, conniving just to stay alive; would he permit him to lie prostrate on a large, black-and-white swastika-designed rug, eating sausage from the floor to give himself the strength for an erection so he can fornicate with his jailor, a mountainous woman who says, "First...*iss*, then...*fick*"?

That the jailor is a woman is also a feminine conceit, I feel, and no man would show a woman to be as cruel and punitive, or as muscular, as the commandant in charge of the Italian prisoners. Bloated and poker-faced, she sneers as she inspects, with whip in hand, the shrunken genitals of her Latin admirer. While she may be the object of his flattery, as far as she is concerned, he is a "macaroni shit."

The sexual act of this ill-mated pair is a travesty of wheezing and fantasizing, a total degradation of the male who, in this instance, is the whore as he performs mechanically, kissing like a buzz saw, exhausting himself before an inscrutable, bovine Buddha who holds the power of life and death over him.

Faulkner said that man is "puny" and yet he "endures." And so it is with Pasqualino. His intellectual friend riots and thus invites death; and his anarchist friend, in disgust, takes his own life; Pasqualino has the imagination to survive. It is a triumph of inferiority, although in its way it may also be an act of courage, because Pasqualino instinctively knows that you have to "die a little in order to live."

Throughout this work there are Fellini-like touches — grotesqueries —but none is more ironic than the unexpected sight of a chalet in the woods, representing the German hausfrau with an abundance of food, Oriental rugs and paintings of ancestors hanging from the wooden rafters: a total respectability in contrast to the killing of respectable people not far away from this hearth and its lieben music.

I am convinced that, more than those of Fellini, the films of Chaplin have influenced Wertmüller, enabling her to make political statements in the same way that Chaplin did in *Modern Times* and *The Great Dictator*. Like Chaplin, Wertmüller translates her ideology into absurdities; but, unlike Chaplin, she uses black comedy not as a means of distraction but primarily as a build-up to traumatic endings, such as in *Seven Beauties* in which the prisoners fall to their knees, in humiliation, before the terrifying authority of their captors. The scene left me devastated, and I was not in the least consoled by the wry, final comment, "In the end we may all be fighting over an apple."

I am reminded of Chaplin dancing with the globe. Has anything changed? Cinematically? Surely not when pantomime and chase are as viable as they ever were, and the silent film comedy techniques of the past are clearly a source of Wertmüller's strength. Time and again an entire scene is silent, even moments of profound tragedy. For just as Wertmüller is given to exaggeration, she is also capable of understatement. Through Pasqualino's eyes, we see a hillock in the distance; a group of men and women slowly mount it, and upon reaching the top, remove their clothes, pile them up neatly, and then stand in resignation before a firing squad. Not a word is spoken.

The power of silence is also demonstrated when the prisoners, herded together under a vaulted ceiling to await inspection, stand naked, not even an inch apart, without any dignity. Yet dignity alone is not enough, says Wertmüller; there is also the matter of justice, and she juxtaposes these two values in all her films. For unlike Fellini, who explores inwardly, thus prodding the psyche, she explores outwardly, raising questions pertinent to today's society and leaving them unanswered. It is up to the viewer to find the answers, even if it takes a second viewing.

All Wertmüller films have a consistency of style and persistent themes, although her powers of invention are rich enough so that she does not repeat herself. In *The Lizards*, her first film (never shown here), the young men of a small Southern town spend a great deal of time chasing girls, but when the girls want to give themselves, the boys shy away. They avoid responsibilities, paralyzed more by their own fears than by a lack of opportunity. One youth goes to Rome; he finds a dreary job, becomes bored and lonely, although he lies to his companions about his adventures in the big city, and when he returns home for a visit he decides to stay there. He is a typical hometown boy, afraid to risk, finding his identity in the safety of provincialism.

While *The Lizards* resembles *I Vitteloni* in theme, Wertmüller lacked the finesse and depth of Fellini, and it is not until her second film, *The Seduction of Mimi*, that she displays a gift for irony. Mimi learns the hard way never to talk, to bear witness, or to take chances when he votes as he pleases and loses his job. From then on, the Sicilian, who leaves Catania and his frigid wife, has no beliefs of his own, although he falls in love with a warmhearted girl who knits as well as Madame Defarge and whose political principles are just as strong.

Unfortunately, Mimi becomes exercised only over the question of his wife's cuckoldry, which calls for revenge, accomplished by an outrageous seduction. It never occurs to Mimi to accord to his legal wife the same privileges of having another partner. Mimi's need for moral satisfaction is rooted in his machismo. His principles are dictated by expediency, and eventually his mistress, an idealist, rejects him because she prefers a man of conviction.

In *Love and Anarchy*, the peasant Tunin, with his innocent face and lentil-sized freckles, has convictions, but he fails to perform the one heroic act that will give purpose to his life, the assassination of Mussolini. By oversleeping in the protective arms of a prostitute, he misses the rally where Il Duce will speak. When the police pursue him in a mad chase, he is followed by two prostitutes, Salome and Tripoli, both whores in love, one fighting to save him, the other to save his ideals.

Next to *Seven Beauties*, I find *Love and Anarchy* to be Wertmüller's most important film. The whorehouse in which it takes place seems to me a symbol of Italy,

and the prostitutes who are in the habit of treating each other cruelly become one big, squabbling family. The petty rivalry, avarice, and selfishness of the whores offer a distraction; harmony is impossible and chaos normal.

In *Swept Away*, Wertmüller emphasizes politics less and sex more. Here she exposes the role playing of both male and female, the dissembling on the part of one or the other, the rich bitch or the virile, rope-slinging, sweaty, exploited seaman, both of whom are isolated on an island, and both of whom are creating a world away from the world. Wertmüller shows that we cannot escape from a system of some kind or from the inevitability of one human being dominating another. In the course of the film, a self-imposed society evolves, the radical sailor giving commands, the reactionary socialite accepting without question. It makes for a cozy establishment of two until reality intrudes. When the two are rescued, the lover cringes under the blows of the forgotten wife waiting for him at the pier, while the woman returns to a loveless, haughty milieu.

In her films, Wertmüller evokes a certain sense of melancholia, which is shown in the chaotic, diffuse, comic *All Screwed Up*, better explained by its original title, *Everything's in Place, Nothing's in Order*, a comment on our society with its penchant for logic and perfection. In this film young people who migrate from the South to Milan to find jobs are caught up in a web of consumerism. Some of them work in a slaughterhouse which the director uses as a dramatic setting for what virtually becomes a ballet of beef and a metaphor for man's need to "consume."

In all Wertmüller comic-tragedies, I find a recurring theme: the absurdity of a man's predicament. While he pretends outwardly to be in command of his destiny, he experiences within a fear and trembling that comes from his anxiety over being alone, his fear of being abandoned, his expectation of bodily harm, and his knowledge of impending death. All are fears that he cannot reconcile and so he denies them, and instead cherishes false virtues, dignity, pride, self-importance, and an inflated idea of his own potency.

Wertmüller also seems to suggest that, in order to maintain a needed sense of illusion, man sees woman as a symbol of purity requiring protection. By having dominion over her he is able to conceal his own sense of dependency. In fact, he sometimes is more comfortable in the company of women, for with men he experiences a sense of inferiority unless he can prove his manhood, as Pasqualino does in *Seven Beauties*.

In a scene from *Seven Beauties* that rises to a peak of hysterical humor, the cocky Neapolitan, to impress the local don, disposes of a well-severed body by packing it in a few loosely tied valises which he intends to post to different parts of Italy. On the way to the railroad station, he is followed by a dog, nipping and barking at his heels.

The tension of such an incongruous scene produces squeamish laughter. Yet, all ends on a note of pervasive sadness. It is part of the Wertmüller technique to project two forces at once: the aesthetic principle of the clown. For only the harlequin balances the opposite polarities of emotion and succeeds in evoking both an uproarious and distressing response in the onlooker. It is the same incongruity that Wertmüller strives for and achieves, and very few artists are able to attain it.

Everything Wertmüller does is by design. Wertmüller selects music for its value as wry commentary, edits in counterpoint, manipulates space symbolically, and uses poetic colors, particularly toward the end of *Seven Beauties*. The descending fog sometimes has the quality of Phoenician glass; it is as opalescent as mother-of-pearl, impregnated by gold and lapis undertones, as though the sheen of such jewels were trying to burst through what appears to be an enveloping mist which portends the twilight of man or the end of civilization.

It is the very connotation of no color that implies the existence of color, and the negation itself produces a subtle sensitivity in the viewer. It arouses a feeling of mourning, a sense of emptiness, and I felt bereft as though personally in the presence of death. A certain mysticism transcends the men as they fall to their knees under the vaulted dome of what had been an early Roman temple.

This unique setting, just outside Rome, was found by Enrico Job, the artist husband of Wertmüller who acts as her art director. "He casts a net of illusions around all my ideas," Wertmüller told me, and I began to see Job's influence: the Roman Forum as an appropriate site to abandon a dying professor; the baroque city hall of Catania before which its inelegant citizens wrangle; the lonely Chirico square outside Rome with Mussolini atop an obelisk, around which a motorcycle circles like a gyrating bug.

The Italian hand of Job can also be seen in the winding stairway down which the victorious Neapolitans and American sailors rush the cluttered bordello room with its bidet, dolls, and hat pincushion in *Love and Anarchy*; in the Afro hairstyles and fantastic frontless oval gowns of the prostitutes, exposing their navels, in *All Screwed Up*; and in the loft in *The Seduction of Mimi* where Mimi and his mistress live surrounded by her knitted sheets, her knitted towels, and tablecloths behind her knitted curtains.

The Jobs work very closely together; he is more restrained than his wife who can become intense, but together they make a balanced team. Job has a European artistic background as a painter and sculptor; he became a stage and set designer, and lately a performance artist, whose conceptual art includes poetry and photography which he executes on Roman street corners. His wife, proud of this work, takes out albums of it to show visitors.

While Job contributes the abstract and aesthetic qualities to the films, Wertmüller, who comes from the theater and who was a playwright and stage director, adds pacing and timing to her own original stories.

Wertmüller, who considers herself a popular artist, values the judgment of her avant-garde artist husband, who says she is her own sternest

critic, but they love working together. The trouble is they never cease talking about the work. They confer on every scene—costumes, makeup, colors, camera angles. Nothing is too miniscule. I can even imagine their deciding together that Giancarlo Giannini should have dirty black fingernails when he rapes the girl in the insane asylum.

Job is over six feet tall, prematurely gray at forty-two, with a ravishing smile and an air of tranquility. Wertmüller is small and dynamic, an intellectual with an air of concentration, and an acute curiosity that could only begin in childhood. Although born in the Fascist era and exposed to war, she understood, like other children of her time, what Mussolini was—"a megalomaniac with shoes of cardboard"—even though he was supposed to be the "savior of Italy." One of two children, Wertmüller had a comfortable home life and her father, a successful lawyer, had in his background a grandparent from the Northern border on the Swiss Alps, accounting for the name Wertmüller. Which belies the facts: that she looks as Italian as Anna Magnani; that she was born in Rome; that she spent her happiest days at the Regina Cinema, a neighborhood movie house; that she was less interested in Romulus and Remus than she was in the mythology of Hollywood, believing everyone in America slept on white satin pillows like Carole Lombard; that she loved Katharine Hepburn and Fred Astaire; that she grew up on Flash Gordon and American jazz. In fact, her first successful movies were popular musicals starring pop singer Rita Pavone, although she never mentioned these highly successful ventures or her numerous TV programs and commercials—all part of her early experience—during her recent visit here.

She did speak, however, of Fellini, having worked first on his *8½* as assistant director; but, as she told me, you don't learn picture making from him, you "experience" Fellini. "You get in touch with a whole new dimension. In the eighteenth century, a young man would take a trip around the world to get an education. In the same way, today, a trip around Fellini brings a person human and spiritual enlightenment. For me he represents the light, the sun, Jesus Christ."

"There are many rivulets going this way and that," continued Wertmüller, and I understand what she means, because she sees in everything the ambiguities, the contradictions, and the complexities that the mature mind has to cope with because, "paradise does not belong to the earth," and here we have to make choices.

One of Wertmüller's best choices was Giancarlo Giannini, the gifted actor whose sense of humor is attuned to her own. The fact that these two have found each other is a stroke of destiny. They have such rapport that Wertmüller, who talks constantly when she directs, takes Giannini into her confidence. He is practically the only one on the set who knows what the script is about and where she is going.

Although she speaks candidly, I found that no one knows much about her, and even those people who have worked with her say that she is close only to her mother and to her husband of twelve years. As far as her politics are concerned, while she identifies herself as a Mancini Socialist, I was told that, like most Italians, she is more intellectually than politically committed. "It's amazing," she said to me, "in Rome nothing works but everybody goes about his daily life as if everything were fine."

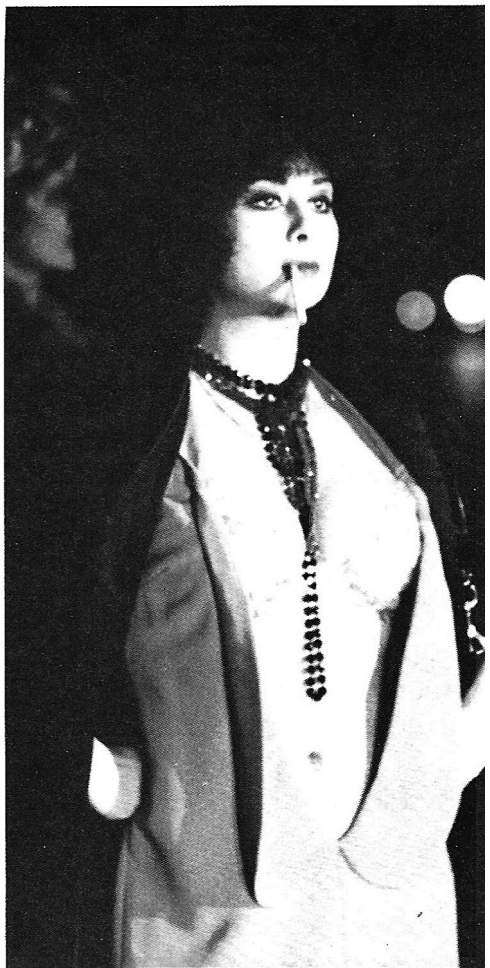
While Wertmüller's dignity does not allow for personal questions, it is clear that she has determination and a need to accept challenge. Why else would anyone, who at forty-seven has earned her reputation, take on the new challenge that America represents? She is about to make the first of four pictures for Warner Bros., and "Caligula" is the one likely to be produced first. It is a story suited to her. "I love it so much," she told me; "I have had to put it aside, because I have written too many scripts."

I find a certain equanimity in the Italian director that is refreshing. She knows exactly who she is. She accepts herself. At the same time, she has admitted to me that whenever anything goes wrong, she asks herself, "Is it my fault?"

Around her neck Wertmüller wears heavy amber beads interspersed with silver Turkish coins; she has several other silver chain necklaces she wears at the same time, as well as one long gold chain with charms, each one representing a film with its title and date inscribed. I seldom saw her without these worry beads, as I came to think of them. She certainly would not be photographed without her talismans, including an assortment of rings, or without the thick, white-rimmed sunglasses she always wears indoors.

The women in her films reflect many aspects of Wertmüller herself. Every one of them is a strong woman. I have studied them all, and they are supportive of the men and without exception have convictions. They cannot be dismissed lightly, because they think independently, even though society puts them in a passive role. Salome, for instance, in *Love*

Isa Danieli in All Screwed Up, *a comedy of urban consumption. A slaughterhouse and a pizza kitchen become metaphors for unbridled modern consumerism.*



and Anarchy, while herself not an anarchist, does everything possible to instill courage in the assassin and does not allow herself to become distracted the way he does.

Mimi's girl friend believes in love and chooses to preserve her virginity although, politically, she is a rebel who refuses any kind of compromise. In *Swept Away*, the woman eventually yields to what could be a reeducation, however temporary. And in *Seven Beauties*, the commandant, though heinous, is told by Pasqualino, "Maybe you are a victim of your sense of duty."

I feel Wertmüller's sympathies are with women, but she has no need to exalt them, and she does not hesitate to treat them with a sense of humor. If women do not laugh at themselves, she has said, then they are immature. She herself has a hearty laugh, and laughs often.

What preoccupies Wertmüller in her films are the frailties of men that they themselves are afraid to acknowledge. The men in her films struggle, but they are all losers. Tunin is apprehended, although he never succeeds in his assassination plot; Mimi keeps his job but loses the girl he loves; Pasqualino survives but his life has no real meaning. And so it goes, leaving us to wonder how Wertmüller will handle "Caligula."

Whatever the results, they will be worth watching. It can already be noted that there has been a difference in the Wertmüller negotiations. Unlike recent flirtations between European directors and Hollywood companies, Wertmüller, following the old studio tradition—in what may be a very wise move—has contracted for four pictures rather than for a single one. This means that she will be working under the aegis of an American company for some time to come, although she has an option to make two of these pictures abroad. She has already told a friend that she wants to spend six months in a small American town in the Midwest. How she will react should be interesting. And seeing ourselves through untarnished eyes should be illuminating. ★

Lillian Gerard, once the managing director of the Paris Theater in New York, is now on the staff of the Museum of Modern Art.

Above: Giancarlo Giannini as a Neapolitan popinjay in the latest film, Seven Beauties. *Giannini is one of the few on the movie set who is privy to Wertmüller's intentions.*

Below: Mariangela Malato in Love and Anarchy. *In three films she has ranged the Wertmüller spectrum: from whore to idealist, always with a core of strength.*

Illustration by Willy Pogany from Allan Day's 1945 Hollywood novel, Goddesses in Slacks.

THE HOLLYWOOD NOVEL

The Love-Hate Relationship Between Writers and Hollywood

Budd Schulberg

Leaving Hollywood thirty-five years ago for the first of my habitual defections, I chose, symbolically, the opposite end of the continent, a pastoral hamlet in Vermont just across the Connecticut River from Dartmouth College. Having been raised in Hollywood and having put in three years there as an apprentice screenwriter—"junior writers" they called us in those days—I had decided I would rather be a novelist than a $1,000-a-week big-studio employee. What I would have to write my novel about of course involved Hollywood. Almost every writer works outward from his hometown, and Hollywood was mine—almost uniquely mine, it seemed to me then.

In the Stanley Rose Book Shop on Hollywood Boulevard, which had become our literary headquarters in the thirties, I had mingled with *book* writers for whom I held a special awe not reserved even for $2,500-a-week screenplaywrights who twirled their hats or reread *The Hollywood Reporter* while they waited and waited for an Irving Thalberg, a David O. Selznick, or a B. P. Schulberg to admit them to the inner sanctum. At Stanley Rose's, the writers who made an indelible impression on me were William Faulkner, John O'Hara, William Saroyan, Nathanael West, Scott Fitzgerald among the better known; and Guy Endore, Michael Blankfort, Aben Kandell, Jo Pagano, Daniel Fuchs, John Fante, and perhaps half a dozen other gifted men whose contribution to our national letters may exceed their present reputations.

I was a natural target for their questions on the seemingly inexhaustible subject of Hollywood, because in those days it seemed to them such a curiosity that Hollywood (a self-contained duchy dedicated to printing pictures on celluloid) should produce a sport who was far more excited by the printed word than by the ten reels of glossy film which was literally canned and served up to a hungry public. At that time I had written a number of short stories about Hollywood for *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *Liberty*, *Esquire*, and other magazines, and everyone—from Pep West to the taciturn (even when profoundly intoxicated) Bill Faulkner—was telling me that I ought to try my hand at "the Hollywood novel."

The Hollywood novel, of course, like the Great American Novel, is a conceit, a mirage, a reach for a sense of totality which exists more in the literary imagination than in any actual achievement. Where for instance is *the* Russian novel? Is it *War and Peace*? *Crime and Punishment*? *Oblomov*? Each is a masterwork, each is Russian to the core, and each could not be more different from the other. There are tempting comparisons between Russia and Hollywood: There are czars, ruling families, secret agents, major domos, struggling masses, and occasionally a sacred cause—like a war or an epic motion picture—that temporarily unites all the contending factions.

Unless a giant's giant came along—a Tolstoi-cum-Dostoevski-cum Turgenev, a Fitzgerald-cum-Wolfe-cum-Faulkner-cum-Hemingway—*the* Hollywood novel would have to be a collection of novels, treating all levels of the geographically simple, but culturally complex, motion picture industrial society. Nathanael West had just polished his cameo, his small gothic tale of Hollywood's lower depths, *The Day of the Locust*, and had received the dismal reception which he had come to accept as his ironic fate. Pep West's dour, patient, sardonic resignation had become his public personality. Scott Fitzgerald was working from the other end of the spectrum, writing his own sensitive, romantic, ambitious spirit and heart into the creation of an unusual motion picture tycoon who bore more than a casual relationship to "the boy-genius of MGM," Irving Thalberg.

At the end of the thirties we were not yet aware of the scope of Fitzgerald's conception, and we were still mourning the "failure" of West's unappreciated *Locust*. "Why," we Stanley Rosers used to speculate over our generous proprietor's bottomless pitchers of orange wine, "was there such a dearth of novels about Hollywood? How could so many good writers—Dorothy Parker, Dashiell Hammett, Lillian Hellman, Ben Hecht, Aldous Huxley; from Theodore Dreiser to Robert Benchley—come to Hollywood and not be moved by its urgency, its outrageously American dynamics, its symbolism as the super capital of the Great American Rat Race?"

When I holed up in Norwich, Vermont, I pre-

pared myself for the writing of *What Makes Sammy Run?* by taking on a major distraction—the reading of every Hollywood novel I could unearth. I must have read at least two dozen, beginning with one of the more literate, that early tongue-in-cheeker, Harry Leon Wilson's *Merton of the Movies*, and working my way through a three-foot shelf of lively trash, things like *Hi Diddle Diddle* by Charles Saxby and Louis Molnar, and *Sky Rocket*, the rags-to-riches saga of a movie star by that prolific sob-sister happily still with us, Adela Rogers St. John. I would walk down the middle of the deserted main street of Norwich with all those Hollywood sugar plums dancing in my head. For the most part they were a helpful guide as to how not to write *the* or even *a* Hollywood novel. Oh, they reflected the Hollywood of the great silent days, no doubt about that. But in a cliché-ridden town where every hit picture had its score of pale carbon copies, they seemed to be largely a collection of used movie plots pushed into prose. The Hollywood community, chock-a-block with dramatic illiterates who could thrive in the hyped-up atmosphere of advertisements-for-myself, tended to inspire insipid tales with sentimental turning points and happy endings to match the most splendid bathos that MGM, Universal, and Fox could foist upon us.

In an attempt to analyze the trend of twenty-odd years of Hollywood literature I found it helpful to divide the novels into four general groups:

First, the Glamour books, glorified fan magazine stuff in which Cinderella was dusted off, given the current coiffure, called Delight Darling, and whisked off to the Hollywood Ball, where eventually she was rescued from a life of tatters and ashes by a Prince Charming in the form of an uncharacteristically unselfish producer or a leading man able to love her for herself alone. Of course, *Sky Rocket* belonged to that group, and so did a cluster of other feminine Horatio Algers tracing a young girl's rise from poverty to the dizzy heights of stardom, only to find that she has lost the most precious thing in life, True Love, somewhere along the way. There was *That Flannigan Girl* by the well-known silent leading lady, Patsy Ruth Miller; *Minnie Flynn* by one of the silent day's most successful screenwriters, Frances Marion; and *Remember Valerie March*, by Katherine Albert, whose press agent background supplied a hint of Hollywood cynicism to her romance.

In an essay, "The Hollywood Novel," contributed to a promising but short-lived quarterly called *Film*, this writer found a handful of wheat among all the chaff this genre produced:

"In spite of their plots, these books give us a suggestion of the real drama of the turbulent early days when the motion picture was just beginning to find itself in America. It almost seems as if the real Hollywood—the abnormal conditions of competition, the strain and intensity of individual relationships, the contradiction between tremendous technological progress and the cultural lag in the industry itself—is so full of dynamic material that it is bound to spill over into the work of any author approaching it, regardless of how cavalier his approach may be."

The second approach to Hollywood I called The Satiricals or Laugh-It-Offs. Deriving their humor chiefly from an emphasis on and exaggeration of the screwball phase of film production, they were considered by many critics as the most successful if not the only medium for treating the Hollywood experience. Hollywood, this genre has been trying to tell us, is a funny place where funny people do funny things, and the Hollywood book or play that doesn't play it for laughs is simply taking itself too seriously. The granddaddy of those works was Harry Leon Wilson's *Merton of the Movies*, a literate spoof of moviemaking in the early twenties, to be followed by Carl Van Vechten's *Spider Boy*, J. P. McEvoy's *Hollywood Girl*, and Jane Allen's (then Mrs. Ring Lardner, Jr.) more barbed *I Lost My Girlish Laughter*.

One of the most successful efforts along this line was George Kaufman and Moss Hart's Broadway hit, *Once in a Lifetime*. Hilarious when it first appeared, it is still amusing some forty years later because its humor was built on a solid foundation, piercing the foibles, pomposities, and conceits of an adolescent industry trying to grow up to a man-sized job. Its background was the early days of sound, when every actor was rushing to the mirror to inspect his larynx, and any Cal Tech freshman who knew how to hook up a mike stood a good chance of becoming the studio's sound expert. *Once in a Lifetime* may lack the critical depth demanded of true satire, but it remains a first-rate travesty on a state of mind easily (perhaps too easily) rebuked as "typically Hollywood," when the silent screen gave way to talking pictures.

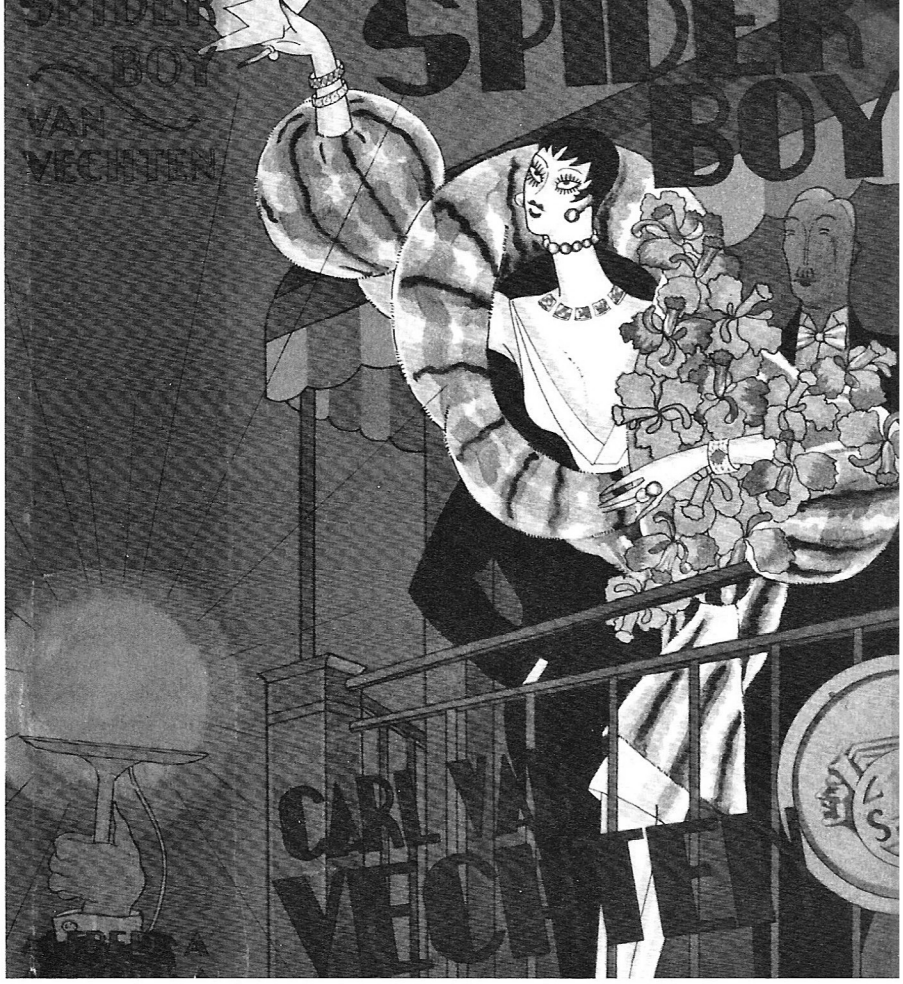
A third category of Hollywood fiction might be categorized as The Muckraker and Sex Shocker. On my five-foot shelf of Hollywood novels are a number of fifth-rate fictions, sexually lurid and anti-Semitic, which paint Hollywood as Sodom and Gomorrah, where executive satyrs with exaggerated Jewish names prey on innocent teenage hopefuls who have come to the city of sin fresh from middle-American farms and well-behaved small towns. The fact that immigrant Jews, excluded from this nation's established industries, were willing to gamble on the unproven medium, in which the film literally flickered in the Nickelodeons and the Penny Arcades, clearly accounted for the ascendancy of Jewish pioneers in the field of motion pictures in the teens, twenties, and thirties. But it is doubtful whether sex played a more vital role in Hollywood than it did in any large department store or Eastern advertising business.

Unfortunately, contributing to the phallus school of Hollywood fiction was Horace McCoy, better known for the effective *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, whose *I Should Have Stayed Home* played into the hands of the Hollywood baiters. Sadly, so did a novelist as distinguished as John Dos Passos, whose Hollywood sections of *The Big Money* were unworthy of the author of the monumental *U.S.A.* Dos Passos presented the sexual acrobatics of an egocentric genius, a sex-mad matinee idol, and his novel's heroine in a fit of two-dimensional writing which convinces us that even major writers should stay away from a scene and an experience of which they obviously have no first-hand knowledge.

Other Hollywood novels more difficult to classify are *Jarnegan* by Jim Tully, *The Day of the Locust* by Nathanael West, *Promised Land* by Cedric Belfrage, and *Queer People* by Carroll and Garrett Graham.

Tully's novel has one foot in the Muckraker-Sex Shocker school, but does take a step forward into our fourth category, a growing sense of realism and an appreciation of Hollywood as the center of a new art form and not merely a composite Casting Couch. His title character is a lusty, two-fisted Irishman, a man of the people, mine worker, tramp, pugilist, circus roustabout, who goes to prison for beating a scab to death. Through his flamboyant sense of the dramatic, his love and understanding of the common people, and his tremendous ego and energy, he becomes one of the great early directors. This is the kind of man, Tully was telling us, who gave the early pictures their spectacular if unsubtle vitality. You may find Marshall Neilan, Jim Cruze, John Ford, and other gifted megaphoners in Tully's *Jarnegan*.

The Day of the Locust defies classification. It has been called Gothic, but perhaps it is more satisfactory simply to call it Westian. With West we are at the opposite end of the spectrum from the Glamour novels. He brings us to Hollywood's Lower Depths; a soul-starved slob of a bookkeeper from the Middle West with itching hands and frustrated sexual appetite; a young studio draftsman from the Yale School of Fine Arts in empty pursuit of a vicious, pathetic extra-girl who hungers for stardom. Her father is a broken-down vaudevillian who draws on a burned-out talent to sell gadgets door to door. There is a splenetic, feisty dwarf; a strong, silent, and stupid Gower Gulch cowboy; a repulsive child actor with a monstrous mother. The cast is Hogarthian, and the climax is a mass sexual orgy outside Grauman's Chinese Theater when a gala opening is plunged into a maniacal wave of self-destruction by "those poor devils who can only be stirred by the promise of miracles and then only to violence." The book is one of the rare Hollywood novels back in print for all to judge.



Vintage twenties' dust jacket from Carl Van Vechten's satirical novel of Hollywood manners, Spider Boy.

Another book difficult to classify is *Promised Land* by Cedric Belfrage. The most ambitious of all Hollywood novels, perhaps influenced by the panoramic approach of Dos Passos, it is nothing less than an attempt to write the history of Hollywood in fictional terms from 1857 to the middle thirties. Belfrage has suggested his own criticism of *Promised Land* in his subtitle, "Notes for a History." As history it provides us with a fascinating overview of Hollywood from its pious "New Jerusalem" days to the conflict between reaction and the so-called progressive forces in the Depression years. As fiction, unfortunately, it is considerably less successful. Rarely do the characters seem more than sandwich men for Belfrage's social comment. In his effort to include as many historical events as possible, he has had to resort to coincidences and overloaded situations, not unlike Upton Sinclair's Lanny Budd series, undermining the novel's promise of social or creative realism. Forty years later it remains a curiosity, a brave attempt at the big novel on American movies that has beckoned to Hollywood writers for more than half a century.

As I look back on my scholarly procrastination, I have come to the conclusion there was another novel that stands out among the porridge of mostly cold fiction I had collected. It was called *Queer People*, by the brothers Carroll and Garrett Graham, and when it was published in 1930 it was the sort of thing you would not dare to bring into a motion picture studio unless you hid it in a brown wrapper and locked it in your middle desk drawer. Like *Ulysses*, it was considered unclean and unfit for respectable studio eyes. The moguls and the mogulettes were eminently respectable in those days. Like the exalted Louis B. Mayer, they believed in God, in Country, in Mother-love, and in the Sanctity of the Home. Their mistresses and their casting couches were none of your goddamn business.

Well, the Grahams dared to break the Commandments, not only Moses's, but even more dangerously, L. B.'s. In *Queer People*, the studio bosses have names like Jacob Schmalz, his unsufferable young son Sam, Isreal Hoffberger, Moe Fishbein, and Sol Snifkin. The *goyim* who work for them refer to them (behind their backs) as kikes and yids, and money is described as "Jewish flags." The book was a Hollywood scandal in the early thirties, when I first read it as a high school boy; and indeed its anti-Semitism, even in those pre-Nazi days, was a burr under the saddle cloth of the sensitive. And continues to be so. Still, the main thrust of the book was refreshingly irreverent, the first Hollywood novel I had come upon that had the courage of its irreverence, and in "The Industry"—as I knew from youthful experience and would soon know more directly after the publication of my Hollywood novel—you had to be prepared to pay for your courage with banishment if not the firing squad.

The Grahams' anti-hero, "Whitey," an archetypal newspaper reporter of the period, in the Hecht-MacArthur tradition—hard drinking, irresponsible, amoral, opportunistic—arrives in Hollywood with symbolic baggage: a frayed beach robe, five short stories, all unfinished, two novels of James Branch Cabell, Ben Hecht's *Count Bruga*, a revolver removed from the body of a slain Chicago gangster, a gin bottle he had drained on the transcontinental Santa Fe, and thirty-six dollars and change. What more—the Grahams have asked with tongue sometimes in cheek and sometimes thrust forward from sensuous lips with evil glee—does a man need to scale the high walls of the Hollywood castle, and what more does he need to fall from those walls back into the moat where the human piranhas wait to eat him alive? Or to vary our metaphor, the unprincipled, fun-loving, ever-ready Whitey may remind us of Alice fallen down the rabbit hole to find herself in a wonderland as inviting as it is daft and dangerous.

Whitey participates in a story conference as insanely logical as the Mad Tea Party; he is in turn gloriously drunk, gloriously rich, gloriously broke, gloriously free to accept Hollywood on its own terms in the old era of three-day parties and big studios which combined the hierarchical authority of the Vatican with the morals of Reno—or of Tijuana. And finally Whitey is gloriously free to say good-bye to all that, as he impressively jumps on a ship heading East through the Canal.

"Whitey stood at the rail as the big ship slipped easily down the harbor and put out to sea. It was a beautiful, clear morning. In the background he could see the blue hills of Hollywood standing sharply against the distant, pale sky. He thought of many things as he watched them dwindle and fade."

Everything about this paragraph is so beautifully dated that *Queer People* takes on an added quality with age. It becomes a racy testament to an era as totally vanished as the civilization of the Aztecs. Nobody leaves Hollywood by rushing up a gangplank anymore. What were once beautiful and clear are now a moon-dust smear of fog. Never again will "the blue hills of Hollywood" stand sharply against the distant, pale sky. Now those hills are sun-baked brown in those rare moments when you can see them. And "the parade of queer people" among whom Whitey adventured in this picturesque novel, alas, have all gone on to Forest Lawn or to an even gaudier Coconut Grove of the fabulous Hotel Ambassador where the great Abe Lyman Jazz Orchestra plays "Ain't Misbehavin" on and on and on....

But, for all its flaws and simplistics, it will be good to welcome this high-spirited nose-thumber of a novel back into print again as one in the Lost American Fiction series of the Southern Illinois University Press. It's a salutory idea, this project of rediscovering and republishing "lost novels," and in *Queer People* we have—if not *the* Hollywood novel—at least a truly seminal work on Hollywood in which may be found the seeds of at least three of the longer-lived Hollywood novels, *The Day of the Locust*, *What Makes Sammy Run?*, and *The Last Tycoon*.

You may also recognize Whitey as a forerunner of Scott Fitzgerald's "Pat Hobby," the irrepressible studio hack, part heel, part victim—an All-American, interchangeable with All-Hollywood in those hilarious and desperate days when Whitey-Pat Hobbies lived off the crumbs from the banquet tables of the queer people who combined the decadent flamboyance of Louis XIV with the stupidity of George III. ✪

Budd Schulberg wrote *The Disenchanted*, among other novels, and the screenplay of *On the Waterfront*.

Dialogue on Film

François Truffaut and Jeanne Moreau

An inquiry into the arts and crafts of filmmaking through interview seminars between Fellows and prominent filmmakers held at Greystone, under the auspices of The American Film Institute's Center for Advanced Film Studies. This educational series is directed by James Powers.

The careers of François Truffaut and Jeanne Moreau have long been mingled in the public mind, and it is something of a surprise to discover that they have made only two films together. (*The 400 Blows* excepted—Moreau has a walk-on part.) The films are *Jules and Jim* and *The Bride Wore Black*. But it is *Jules and Jim* that has become the standard reference—so often cited and revived that it seems not so much a onetime collaboration as a career. And it is a film that nails down, for better or worse, some of the more apparent aspects of the two careers—Truffaut of the sweeping, lyrical camera, of the sudden shifts in mood; Moreau of the easy sensuality, the impish intelligence, the bored charm.

But the connections are deeper. They are both veterans of a heady period, the French New Wave. Both careers flowered in the late fifties and early sixties when filmmaking in France was in renascence. Truffaut was among the new band of filmmakers—like Malle and Resnais—who signaled a sudden freshness in French films; Moreau was among the performers—Jean-Pierre Léaud was another—who gave screen substance to the filmmakers' discordant and sometimes whimsical view of modern life. Beyond this, the two are friends. In the dialogues, Moreau confides to calling up Truffaut at unlikely hours for a bit of advice; Truffaut waggishly paraphrases what Moreau no doubt has said about him.

But the origins and direction of their careers are markedly different. Moreau started as a stage actress in 1948 with the Comedie Française; and in the same year she launched her film career, in Jean Stelli's *Dernier amour*. Her stage work drew increasing attention in the fifties—on one bravura occasion she played the two lead roles in a drama when the other actress took sick. Her film career attracted less notice until Louis Malle cast her in his first feature film, *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud*, in 1958—one of the earliest New Wave films. (In the same year she appeared in Malle's controversial *The Lovers*, whose misty eroticism has not faded with age.) Moreau has since worked for most of the important directors of Europe: for Roger Vadim in *Les liaisons dangereuses*, Michelangelo Antonioni in *La notte*, Luis Buñuel in *Diary of a Chambermaid*, Marguerite Duras in *Nathalie Granger*, and for Jean Renoir in *Le petit theatre de Jean Renoir*.

"She is the only modern actress," Peter Brook once said, and her roles—some in films not always a match for her talents—show an extraordinary range. It is a range that encompasses the variety modern cinema has recognized in women, and that sometimes transcends women. Moreau's devastating ennui in *La notte*, for example, becomes an examplar of a modern condition.

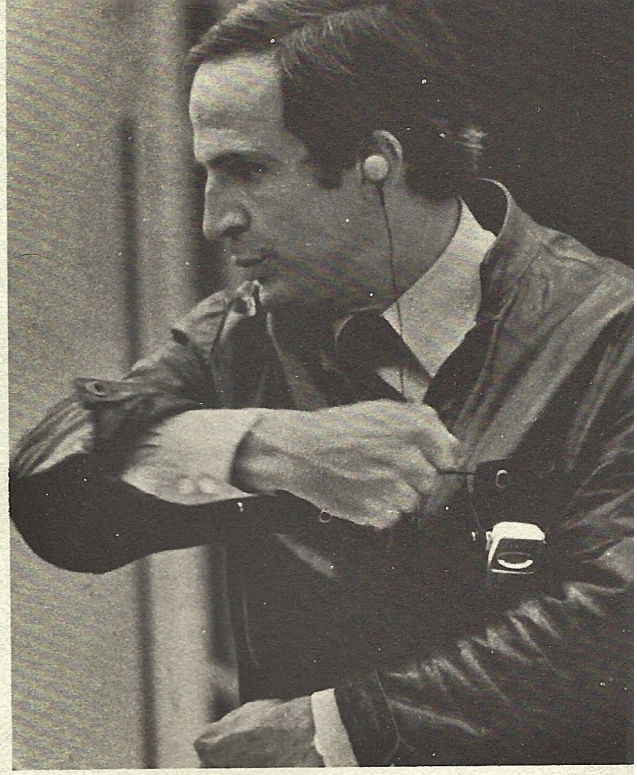
Truffaut's origins have been well publicized: A career of juvenile delinquency, reform school, rescue by the eminent critic André Bazin, a spectacularly youthful career as a critic for *Cahiers du Cinéma*. But of the Angry Young Men of *Cahiers* who went off to make iconoclastic films, Truffaut's have been both technically reticent—no Godardian revolution—and more obviously indebted to tradition. His autobiographical *The 400 Blows*, for example, was immediately compared to Vigo's *Zéro de conduite*, and Truffaut has long acknowledged Renoir as his idol. Truffaut, unlike Godard, has also shunned politics and social comment in his films—"The characters in a film interest me more than the story," he once said, "so I can't make a film of ideas."

Truffaut is preeminently a director of characters, with a loving concern for the weak, the young, the roguish. And he is a director of details—offhand gestures, sudden intimacies, the bits and pieces that revealingly clutter lives. "I like everything which muddles the trail, everything which sows doubt."

Truffaut once playfully wrote in *Esquire*: "I am the happiest of men. I make my daydreams come true, and I get paid for it." That New Wave exuberance in filmmaking, mellowed and even soured in others, has never left him.

At his seminar, Truffaut spoke in French, and Eva Lothar, an AFI Fellow, acted as interpreter. Truffaut's responses have been translated for *American Film* by Maria Enrico. Moreau, at her seminar, spoke in English.

François Truffaut



The director as director in Day for Night, *Truffaut's wryly comic tribute to filmmaking.*

Question: Is there anything you'd like to say before the questions?

Truffaut: I'd only like to say that I'm terrified. Usually I communicate better with one person at a time. Only through my films do I communicate with lots of people, and even then, I hide behind my films, just as I intend to hide myself a little bit here today.

Question: Why are you in the U.S. now?

Truffaut: Just vacation.

Question: What is your impression of Hollywood and Hollywood films?

Truffaut: It's too general a question.

Question: Are there any directors who make films in Hollywood whose work you admire?

Truffaut: Oh yes. Milos Forman. He's making American films.

Question: Would you do a film here?

Truffaut: I would really like to do a film in French here. I receive one or two scripts every month from Hollywood. I always read them, or someone helps me read them. And I am happy because usually it's not my kind of material. I suppose if there were something I really liked, it would be a problem. Had I received, for example, the screenplay for *Paper Moon*, I think I would have wanted to say yes, because I really liked the relationship between the little girl and the thief. Unfortunately, they send me stories on Prohibition, on Zelda Fitzgerald.

Question: With your interest in films on children, have you ever thought of doing Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*?

Truffaut: No. I think that it really belongs to Salinger and that you really shouldn't make a film of it. I feel the same about Proust. There are some books which I think should remain books, when one is almost sure that the film could not be better or even as good.

Question: Where do you get your scripts?

Truffaut: From newspapers, or in books. *The Story of Adèle H.* was from new information on the Hugo family. When I make films about children they usually are subjects I've been thinking about for a long time. I could make a film on children every year because I feel it's an inexhaustible subject, but I hold back because I don't want to become specialized.

Question: How did you come upon the story for *Adèle H.*?

Truffaut: It's an unknown story in France. The books of Victor Hugo always speak of Léopoldine, but never of Adèle, probably because she was insane. It was a little like a family secret. I found documentation on Adèle thanks to an American woman, a professor of French literature at Wooster College in Ohio, Frances Guille. She unfortunately died two months ago.

Question: Without seeing *Adèle*?

Truffaut: She had seen it. She had been interested in the Hugo family for twenty years. She made a thorough investigation of Adèle. She even took the trip from Halifax to Barbados and was able to reconstruct just about everything that happened to Adèle, things even the Hugo family didn't know.

Question: Was the diary of Adèle H. ever decoded?

Jean-Paul Belmondo, Catherine Deneuve in Mississippi Mermaid, *based on the Cornell Woolrich novel.*

Truffaut: Mrs. Guille started to decode it, but she only found the part of the diary written at Guernsey. What was written in Halifax or at the hospital was not found—or what she wrote at the hospital of Saint Mandé, if I'm right, didn't make any sense.

Question: As I watched *Adèle H.* I kept thinking of Empress Carlotta, who traveled to Mexico and went mad. A coincidence?

Truffaut: Accidental. I myself sometimes thought of Bette Davis.

Question: Did you intend to do a panegyric on love for love's sake?

Truffaut: The idea was to make a film about love involving only one person. That was the first idea. The second idea was to make a film that had a maximum of inner violence. Emotional violence. How can I say it—I'm not happy about what happens to Adèle.

Question: Were you entirely satisfied with your ending to *Adèle H.*?

Truffaut: I think it's the part I like best. In fact, to give you a more serious answer, the ending was done in response to some observations that reviewers had made about *The Wild Child*. I was reproached for not showing what happened to the

child afterward. So this time I said, "If they want particulars, I'll give them particulars."

Question: In the scene in the house where Adèle is rejected by her lover, there is an enormous display of emotions. How did you evoke that?

Truffaut: It was very difficult because I realized when the actors started to rehearse, that the scene wasn't written well. I had a very talented actress who could show her emotions, but the text didn't move well. Anyway, we shot it without cutting; in the film it looked like lots of shots, but it's because I cut it afterward with the different takes. But I let the scene be played out almost completely, up to the moment when she goes up the stairs.

Question: When you realized the scene wasn't written the way you wanted, did you rewrite it?

Truffaut: It wasn't possible then, unfortunately, because there was an English actor who already had had a lot of trouble learning his lines. But otherwise, I think that, yes, you must change the text sometimes.

Question: Did you feel that the fact that Adèle H. was a woman in any way determined what happened to her?

Truffaut: No, because I know some men who are in exactly the same situation.

Question: In one scene, Adèle lies about her name to a little boy. Then she returns, gives him her real name, and the camera stays on the child for a long time. Why?

Truffaut: I didn't think it was too long. It's more delicate than having dissolves and similar things because that helps the image.

Question: You didn't use dissolves?

Truffaut: No, I didn't, but then the length of the shot shows that the scene is finished. In this film we tried, most of the time, to do dissolves while shooting.

Question: How did you work with your cameraman, Nestor Almendros?

Truffaut: I asked Nestor Almendros to shoot because he is the cameraman I admire most. I've made fourteen-fifteen films, and I find that the only ones that are beautiful to look at are the ones I did with Almendros. He is especially great with period films, with candles and oil lamps. We got together and agreed that *Adèle H.* should be subdued, that there should be nothing white, and nothing that shines. We agreed on not showing the sky, nor the sun, as much as possible. But he deserves all the credit for the photography.

Question: By the way, do you follow the practice of attaching a videotape camera to your 35mm camera in order to see rushes immediately?

Truffaut: Never did it, never did it. It bothers me a bit. It's like Polaroid pictures. I like to take pictures of my children and go pick them up fifteen days later at the store.

Question: How important is the dialogue versus the image for you? Rather often now, one sees a lessening in the importance of the dialogue and an increase in the importance of the image.

Truffaut: I don't see any competition between image and dialogue in my films.

Question: In the films of others?

Truffaut: I don't know. Bergman's films, for example, are very interesting visually, and there is often a lot of dialogue. I don't think that films are purer when the characters stop talking. One of my favorite Hitchcock films is *Dial M for Murder*, and people speak throughout it. And yet the mise-en-scène is fantastic in this film.

Question: But in general, dialogue does seem to be sacrificed to image.

Truffaut: Oh yes, especially in karate films. But that's an extreme case.

Question: What do you think of dubbed films?

Truffaut: I think that when a film gets dubbed, it means it's a relatively good film, that it's selling well. And I think it's as true for French films as it is for American ones: Dubbing does very little harm to a serious film. But when the film is a comedy dubbing can ruin it.

Question: One edition of your screenplays includes your notes to the screenwriters. Do you communicate with them that way?

Truffaut: Yes. Sometimes I prefer to work that way, almost by correspondence.

Question: Which of your films do you prefer?

Truffaut: No, no. I don't like to classify them. I have a preference for the ones I shoot in the country. But I won't answer. I would only answer with a lot of contradictions.

Question: Do you do much preparation before shooting?

Truffaut: I work very little before shooting. Therefore a lot is left to chance. And yet I would always like to achieve some kind of perfection, which is impossible to obtain in film even when you work a

lot. So it's a contradiction. The other thing is that I work with two kinds of topics: small ones and large ones. What I mean to say is that when I have finished a film, my greatest desire wouldn't be to start all over again, but to do a remake of the film. If it's a small topic, I know that I could do a remake in three years and no one could tell it was a remake. If it's, let's not say a necessarily big topic, but a specific one, I know that I couldn't do a remake for at least fifteen years. For example, I would really like to redo *Day for Night*, but I can't. I think that *Day for Night* said a lot of things about filmmaking but it didn't say enough about acting.

Question: You would show more of that?

Truffaut: Yes, much more.

Question: You are a director. Why did you act in *Day for Night*?

Truffaut: Probably to play the part of a director a bit like me.

Question: Did your dual roles create any problems?

Truffaut: No, it wasn't too difficult. It made me feel more playful. The problem was that sometimes after I had finished acting I would say "cut" too soon. So after a while I told my assistant, Suzanne Schiffman, to say "cut" for me. It's a fact that actors are always impatient, eager to finish.

Question: Because of the film's special nature, did you have less of a script for *Day for Night* than your other films?

Truffaut: The outline was already there before shooting, but the dialogue was written each week on Sunday. Exactly like the scene where I'm with the script girl. I work like that.

Question: If you were to remake *Adèle H.*, what would you do?

Truffaut: I couldn't say. I'll tell you in two years. If she weren't Victor Hugo's daughter, I think there would be a very interesting way of doing the story without showing the lieutenant at all. But I couldn't do it because I don't want to have two people missing from the film.

Question: I think I would only need to see the lieutenant once or twice to understand that relationship. From then on I would like to explore her in her daily being in terms of her breakdown. In the film, one learns of her state of mind not through the persons she meets, but through her diary.

Truffaut: Because she is secretive, yes. It's an unusual script because it's a situation that doesn't move. And that's something I am very interested in. I wanted the audience to react emotionally to the monotony and the repetition. I know that the second scene at the bank is more interesting than the first, and that the third is more interesting than the second. It's the same thing with the scenes at the bookshop. I think the courageous way to have made this film would have been to make it three hours long, taking the chance that people would leave after an hour. That's what happens with O'Neill's plays.

Question: And what would you do if you took the character of the lieutenant out?

Truffaut: I don't like the audience to be confused. I would make sure that no one thought the lieutenant was imagined; that is, even if I didn't show him, I would give some indication that he existed. But this would work only if there were no Victor Hugo.

Question: What is the nature of your collaboration with Suzanne Schiffman?

Truffaut: Suzanne Schiffman studied in Chicago, was a continuity girl starting with Jacques Rivette's first film *Paris nous appartient*, in all of Godard's films, starting with *Le petit soldat*, and in all of mine starting with *Shoot the Piano Player*. Since I spoke much more with her than with the rest of the crew, the first assistant was always very unhappy. So starting with *The Wild Child* I asked her to be my assistant. After that, because she helped me on Sundays in redoing scripts, she became script-writer.

Question: Will she ever make a film of her own?

Truffaut: No, she refuses to. Not even a short.

Question: What were the first reactions to the New Wave films you, Godard, and others presented?

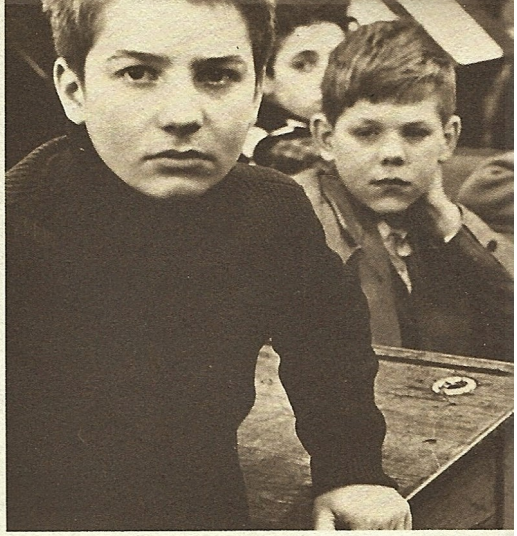
Truffaut: During the first year the public, then the public and reviewers together, thought that the New Wave films were great. And then the next year they thought they were all bad. Virtually every first film from our group, if you can call it a group, was well received. The problem always came with the second film. I was less anxious with my second film, because I felt I'd been accepted as a director. But it was the second film, *Shoot the Piano Player*, that presented a lot of difficulties because it took me six months to get it shown. The tone of the film wasn't understood. It was finally better understood here than there; that is, it was better understood by foreigners.

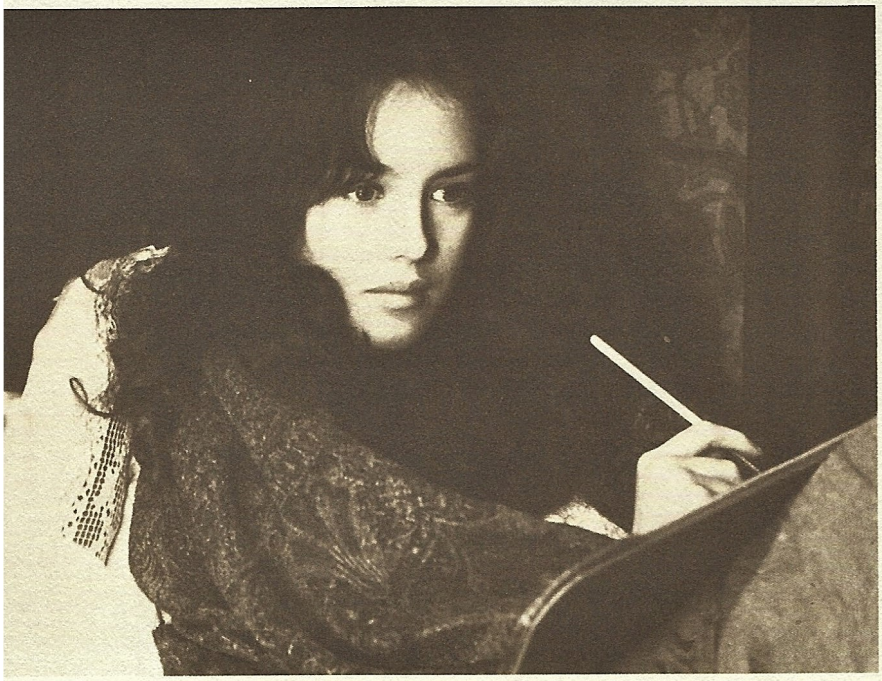
Question: You were a great friend of Jean-Luc Godard. What do you think of what he's doing now, for example his new film, *Number Two*?

Truffaut: I liked *Number Two*. I haven't seen the ones done in the preceding two or three years. But *Number Two* is very good.

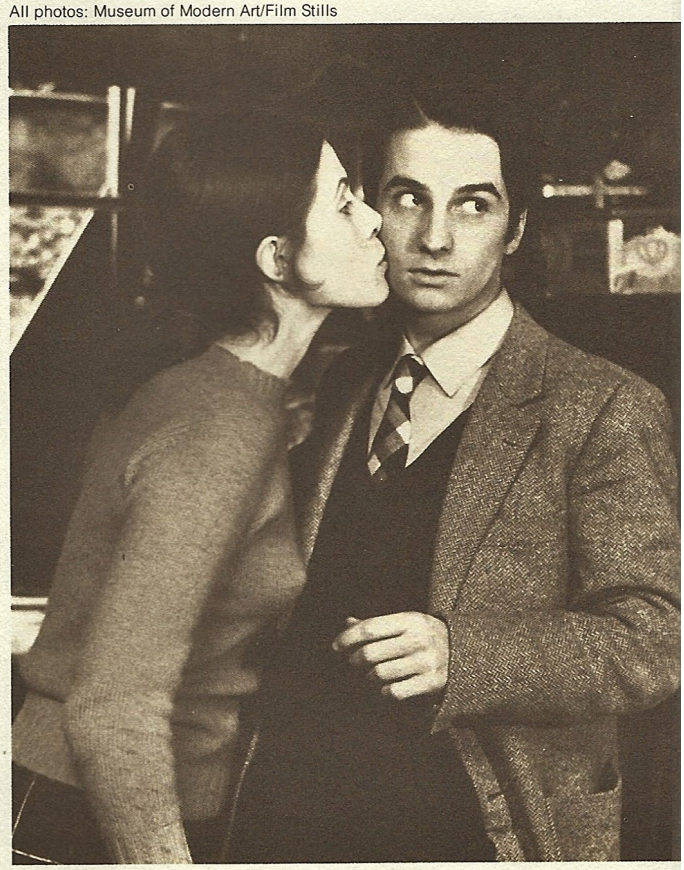
Isabelle Adjani, as Adèle, daughter of Victor Hugo, in Truffaut's The Story of Adèle H.

Jean-Pierre Léaud (right), then twelve, as Antoine Doinel in The 400 Blows *(1959); (below right), Léaud nine years later as Doinel's adventures continue in* Stolen Kisses, *with Brigitte Fossey.*





All photos: Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills



Question: *Jules and Jim* has always been one of my favorite films. How much of it was tailored to Jeanne Moreau?

Truffaut: I wasn't thinking of her when I originally wanted to do the film. It happened gradually. But I think I was able to do the film thanks to her because it was a subject that frightened me very much. I could have done it as a first film. I could have done it as a second film. But something was always making me postpone. Every once in a while Jeanne Moreau would come to see me and very discreetly say, "Well, what's happening with this book you showed me that was so good?"

Question: If you weren't thinking of Jeanne Moreau at first, did you have a different image of the person who was to play the part?

Truffaut: At first I thought it was necessary to have a Scandinavian or German woman.

Question: Did you have a physical image of the character?

Truffaut: No, no, no.

Question: What about the statue that the two men look at?

Truffaut: It was modeled after Jeanne Moreau. Frankly, it wasn't the best thing in the movie. Oh, it was terrible, really terrible.

Question: You said in one of your interviews that you like to work with unknown actors. Are known actors less malleable than unknown ones?

Truffaut: No, there are no set rules. For example, sometimes an unknown actor can be much more difficult. Sometimes a woman who is not very beautiful can be a very difficult actress because instead of wanting to play her part well, she wants to look prettier than she really is. That's only an example.

Question: How do you work with actors, before shooting, during shooting? Jeanne Moreau has her own viewpoint. Now we can compare views.

Truffaut: I know what she tells. Jeanne Moreau always says that when we work together, she carefully reads all the interviews I give before filming to try to understand what I expect from her. But the question is difficult to answer because I don't think there are two actors you can speak to in the same way. Some need to know a lot of things, others need purely physical hints, like how to lift their arms or breathe.

Question: You don't have rehearsals?

Truffaut: No, never. I don't know why. It seems to me that the actor will perhaps act differently if the stage is small, if it's big, if there are doors, windows, if the walls are black, if the walls are light colored. You can't know all of this ahead of time. I also think that cinema work is much more intimate than theater work. Sometimes, even if I have a very intimate scene, it is only hinted at in the script. The lines don't say it. I know that with my personality I usually can't do theater staging because I don't like the idea that I have to speak to all of the actors at the same time. One actor never knows what I've said to another. I don't say that it is necessarily a good method, but it's my method. A little hypocrisy, cunning.

Question: How do you work with children?

Truffaut: The same way. I think that with children you cannot write their dialogue. You give them an idea, tell them what you expect. You can give them the dialogue, but only orally. Then they repeat it, but not always with the words in the right order. No learning by heart. Maybe one can get good results in other ways. I suppose Tatum O'Neal had a set dialogue in *Paper Moon*, and I thought that was a great performance.

Question: Jean-Pierre Léaud gives a very natural performance in *The 400 Blows*. How much of it was improvised, and how much of it set?

Truffaut: With Jean-Pierre Léaud, I soon realized that he himself was a better character than the one in the script. So I chose to change the script a little in order to make it more closely resemble him.

Question: Has your relationship with Jean-Pierre Léaud changed?

Truffaut: Now he is an actor. I mean, he no longer acts as he did in *The 400 Blows*. He didn't know fear then. He acted because it was fun.

Question: Is it dangerous for an actor to really identify with his part?

Truffaut: I would prefer it if he wouldn't, but maybe that's not a courageous answer.

Question: As a director you don't see any advantage to it?

Truffaut: There's a risk that working with the actor will become more difficult.

Question: Why?

Truffaut: It's a very interesting question. I think you would have to question the actors with greater care than we usually do. You would have to ask them why they have chosen to act, when are they pleased, and when do they suffer. I would be very interested in having answers to that, because they don't talk about their own reality. They always talk around it, but they never talk about the real thing.

Question: I noticed in three or four of your films that you use the same line of dialogue. The line is: "She has had a lot of men, and I've had a few women. Well then, it should be evenly matched." Would you comment on the use of this line in many of your films?

Truffaut: Probably because I like the line very much. Jean Cocteau used to say you shouldn't be afraid of repeating yourself. He said, "Sometimes at a party I recite entire passages from my books and people say: 'Well, that's interesting. It's worth putting in writing.' "

Question: Do you think it's feasible to attempt a psychoanalysis of a director from seeing his films?

Truffaut: Yes, certainly, certainly. Especially

Films of François Truffaut

Short Films

1954—*Une visite* (16mm)
1957—*Les mistons (The Mischief Makers)*
1958—*Une histoire d'eau* (with Jean-Luc Godard)
1962—"Antoine et Colette" in *L'amour à vingt ans (Love at Twenty)*. One of five sketches.

Feature Films

1959—*Les quatre cents coups (The 400 Blows)*
1960—*Tirez sur le pianiste (Shoot the Piano Player)*
1961—*Jules et Jim (Jules and Jim)*
1964—*La peau douce (The Soft Skin)*
1966—*Fahrenheit 451* (in Britain)
1967—*La mariée était en noir (The Bride Wore Black)*
1968—*Baisers volés (Stolen Kisses)*
1969—*La sirène du Mississippi (Mississippi Mermaid)*
L'enfant sauvage (The Wild Child)
1970—*Domicile conjugal (Bed and Board)*
1971—*Les deux Anglaises et le continent (Two English Girls)*
1972—*Une belle fille comme moi (Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me)*
1973—*La nuit américaine (Day for Night)*
1975—*L'histoire d'Adèle H. (The Story of Adèle H.)*
1976—*L'argent de poche*

when the film's subject matter is of an emotional nature. I think, for example, that Hitchcock's films and Bergman's are very valuable for psychoanalysts. Buñuel's too.

Question: You once said in an interview that when a director starts he makes experimental films, then becomes more and more conscious of film structure and technique, and then tries to make abstract films, but keeps in mind the box office.

Truffaut: I don't recognize myself in those words because I think all films are experimental. Chaplin's *A Countess from Hong Kong*, for example, is an experimental film. At the beginning it is intellectual and little by little it becomes concrete. It might be that the concrete part will turn against the intellectual part, and that on screen it will be a monstrosity. So a film is always experimental. As for the box office, sometimes I think the film I'm about to shoot will be successful, for example, the film I am doing about children. Sometimes I think it will be unsuccessful, like *Adèle*. I don't think about it. I'm not at all interested in the idea of breaking box-office records. But on the other hand, I don't like having people who trust me lose their money. When we made *The Wild Child* we thought it would be a very unsuccessful film. When we made *Mississippi Mermaid* we thought it would be a very successful film. But *Wild Child* has made more money than *Mississippi Mermaid*. So I've come to have a kind of philosophy: If the film costs less than a million dollars, on principle no one will lose money. But above that there are some very great risks, given my style of working.

Question: How much did *Adèle* cost?

Truffaut: I don't remember. About $750,000.

Question: Do you think that people will someday look back at your films and find them dated, particularly in acting styles?

Truffaut: Oh yes. Already now. But that's also normal. Films have successive lives. A film made ten years ago shocks us for all kinds of things that are old-fashioned, and twenty years later it doesn't shock us because we accept it as a piece of history, like a statement on that period. But I think that in respect to form and the meaning of form, Hitchcock's films have aged the least. You can make any film you want in a train today, and you could never do it as well as *The Lady Vanishes*. That's true, isn't it?

Question: When Ingmar Bergman was here he said that if you have nothing personal to say, don't make films. What do you think?

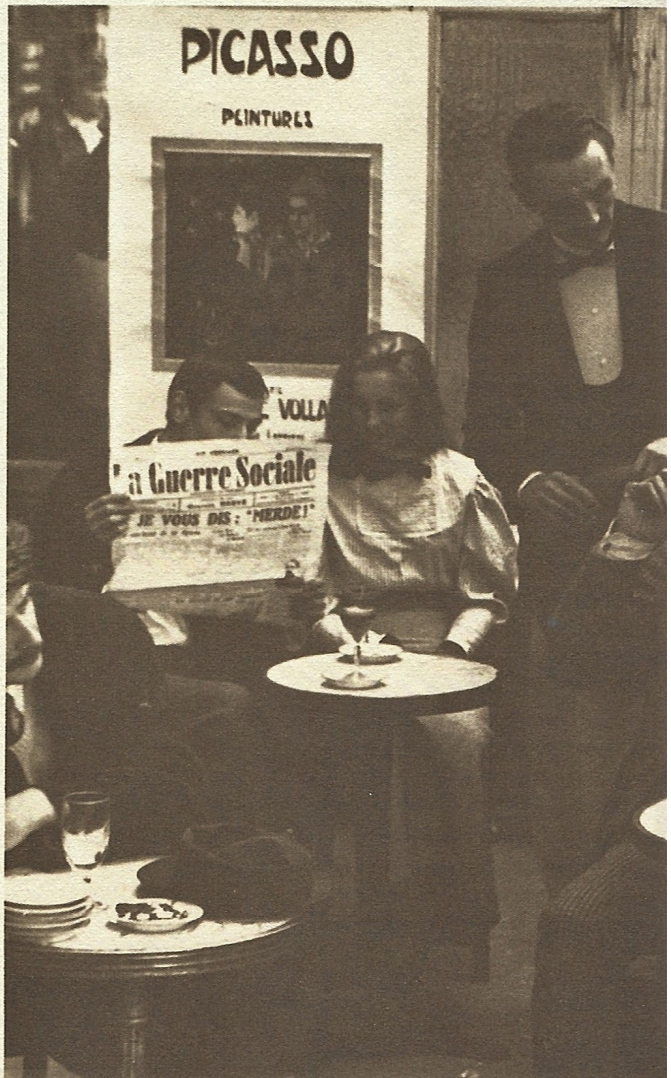
Truffaut: Nevertheless, I think that everyone has something personal to say. But sometimes they don't dare. It's much more difficult, for example, to do original scripts than an adaptation. And one must overcome this anxiety because in reality an original script is easier to write than an adaptation. In any case, the result on the screen, in the case of an original script, is always more coherent than with an adaptation. But with so much taking of ideas from one's self, you get a lot of doubts, and once in a while you would like an idea to come from outside. I might receive one day an idea for a film on Adèle Hugo.

Question: Would you tell us something about your new film?

Truffaut: It's called *L'Argent de poche* [literally, "Pocket Money"]. It's a film I've been wanting to do for a long time because previously when I did a film about children, I followed the same child from beginning to end. Here I have twelve interesting characters—which makes it structurally a little like *Day for Night*. I can't explain the plot because there are so many smaller stories within it. Mainly I just wanted to show children at all ages, starting from three weeks old and up to twelve years old. In addition, behind these twelve characters there are lots of other children.

Question: Why did you stop at twelve?

Truffaut: Because I wanted to stop exactly at adolescence. ■



Jeanne Moreau (above), and Henri Seyre (below), in Jules and Jim, *adapted from Henri-Pierre Roché's autobiographical novel.*

Jeanne Moreau

Question: You've turned to directing. What was it like to make your first film, *La lumiere*?

Moreau: The activity of directing was not something that seemed strange to me, I must admit, because I have worked a lot with very good directors. They allow you a certain freedom once they have spoken with you; it gives you the sensation that you are your own director. So as a director the relationship I had with my actors was a relationship I tried to make as perfect as I could. I was a person who was related to them in a very intimate way, but not too much. Some actors are afraid of too much intimacy and this stops them from expressing themselves. Some others want to rely totally on you, and they even want you to share their personal problems during the time you make the film.

But being a director means more than dealing with actors. Once I was acting in a film for a director who wasn't very good, and I said to François Truffaut on the phone, "Don't worry. I'm the one who makes about 20 decisions a day." He said, "That's nothing because there are about 200 decisions to be made. He still makes about 180 decisions, so whatever you do you're at his mercy." Now I know that it is true: When the day starts it's like a nightmare, and it's like heaven at the same time. You are facing people who are asking questions from the most essential to the tiniest things. But you have to answer even if the question seems idiotic to you; otherwise you take away the strength of one person, minimize his efforts, and then the balance in the crew is not the same.

Question: Why did you decide to direct a film?

Moreau: One night I was watching television, and I was drunk; I had drunk about three glasses of vodka. I was shooting a film with Orson Welles, and we had started in the afternoon with cognac and brandy. I was fascinated as I am always when I watch him work, and it seems so easy. I was watching on television a film with Marlene Dietrich called *Shanghai Express*. I thought, God, there's nothing better than films; nothing is closer to life and so far at the same time. It's just like daydreams, so incredible. So I had another glass of vodka, and I thought, God, one day I have to make a film. Then my thoughts came back to Orson, and I thought, well, not only am I going to make a film, but I am going to write the script, the dialogue, and why not play a part in it? I watched the rest of the film, and I was so exhilarated, so excited.

I had some fruit and another drink, and I couldn't stay still. I called Truffaut, and I said, "Listen,

Novelist Louise de Vilmorin, Jeanne Moreau and director Louis Malle (in background) during the filming of The Lovers.

François, I have made a very important decision tonight." He was half-asleep. I said, "I'm going to do what Orson Welles did. Of course, I'm not as young as he was, but I'll try. I want to direct, write, plan everything." He said, "OK, you go to sleep. You're tired; you're excited; I'm sure you've drunk something." I said, "Yes, I have." And that was all. I was a little vexed because he reacted that way. The next day I talked to Orson, and said, "You're responsible for that." He said, "Don't worry. If you want to do it, you must do it. Maybe it will take a certain time, but you must do it." He was the only person in the profession who said this to me, as if it were very simple and normal. That was ten years ago.

Question: How did the script come about?

Moreau: I had the courage to start writing the script only two years ago. A woman friend, a writer, took me away with her for six days. She took her typewriter because I don't know how to type. She had the bedroom next to mine. I would slip the pages under the door of the bedroom, and then I would hear the typewriter going. I went on writing and writing. The first time I saw my lines typed it gave me such strength that I did the first script.

I gave the script to a friend of mine, a director, and I was badly received because he was very angry that I wanted to be a director. He said, "You're an actress. You're marvelous, you're great. Why should you try to do something else?" I said, "I'm not trying to do something else. I just think that doing all the films I've been doing for so many years isn't so different from what I have done. It seems to me to be the natural consequence of my way of living the life of an actress after those years." I had to overcome that depression, and I wrote another script which was related to the first one. I won't tell you all the miseries I went through. But I also went through lots of happiness, and last summer I finished the fourth script. I was in my apartment in Paris. I had told everyone I was away. I had very little food. I felt the excitement of discovering myself, as long as it lasted, as a writer. Then I had to face reality, which means that I had to find the money, while I started on another script, the fifth.

Question: Revisions of the same script?

Moreau: Different construction. More economical, more precise. I had to throw lots of things away. I found the money from different sources. I went to see TV people, and they gave me a certain amount. In France we have a fund to help young directors, and sometimes you get as much as half the money needed for your film. I got a third. With those two sources of money, I went to see a distributor, the most important in France, who also gave me some. I already had half the money for the film. The film has cost—and it's quite a lot for a first film in France—$600,000. Without my asking, some producers came and backed me for the rest. I was able to start the preparation last May. I wrote another version of the script, the sixth, then started shooting on the eighteenth of August, and worked eight weeks.

Question: Will you continue as both an actress and film director?

Moreau: I cannot stop directing, although, really, I'm not a director yet. I would call myself a director if I had a copy of my film, and I could show it to you. Once it is shown I will be a director—maybe a good, maybe a bad, one; maybe successful or unsuccessful—but I will be a director. Now that I've

started I can't help thinking that I made lots of mistakes, and these mistakes I wouldn't make again if I did another film. So I have to do another film, you see. But directing doesn't stop me from being an actress. There aren't so many directors I want to work with, and I think I will still be an actress because I have a weakness. It's a very great weakness: It's that I fall in love with talent. And as I like to fall in love, I'm always seeking talent. Each time I meet young people who say to me, "I'm sure I have talent, and I want to make a film," I say, "OK, let's do it." People say, "Why are you always working with young directors? You're not normal; you're perverted; there's something wrong with you." Maybe there *is* something wrong with me, but I know I can't live another way. I have a real passion for films.

Question: You were at the seminar when Ingmar Bergman was asked what he would do if he had to choose between theater and film. He said he would choose theater. Despite your passion for films, what would your choice be?

Moreau: I wouldn't accept such a choice. Maybe Ingmar thought he was forced to give an answer, and maybe he had good reasons to give this answer. I will finish cutting my film, but after that I will rehearse and do a play. I love it, but I have been able to live for ten years without going on the stage. I don't think I could stay away as long from films. But I was just thinking as I was answering you that I could live without acting. I wish I could live without working. Once we've chosen to be what we are, we discover that it's such a marvelous way to make a living, because it's not work. It is hard, but it's so closely related to our intimate existence and to the growth of our personality that we need that witchcraft, that torture we are going through to feel alive. I don't think we could live without it.

Question: I have a difficult question. You're a talented and also a beautiful woman. Have you found a conflict between love and work? Have you had to face choices?

Moreau: That's a *very* difficult question to answer. I don't think any love has been able to interfere with my passion. It doesn't mean that I haven't loved, that I don't love, and that I will not love. Maybe it means that there is no choice, and there is no difference between the woman and the actress, or the artist. It's the artist who is dominant. I think if you look back into the history of art, the artist has loved, but what was essential in his life was his art. If you find somebody who wants to live the agonies and the happiness of creation with you, that's all right. But if the person who is by your side cannot stand the artist to be so involved in what he has to do, then you have to part or choose. But I never thought of choosing the other way.

Question: You've talked about Truffaut. How did your role as Catherine in *Jules and Jim* come about? I ask because the novel by Henri-Pierre Roché on which the film is based has other female characters, but the film neglects them.

Moreau: I met François Truffaut when he hadn't made a film yet. He was a critic, and he was very hard. He destroyed what we can now call the old wave, because he and others were called the New Wave. He said to me, "I'd like to make a film once with you," and as always, being attracted by young directors, I said, "Yes, of course." He said, "I'm going to make my first film, *The 400 Blows*, in about a month. I won't have time to see you, but I already have an idea in mind. But I don't want you to read the novel yet, and I'll tell you later." That was a lot of words for Truffaut at the time; he didn't speak much. He made his film, and I appear in *The 400 Blows*.

He never sent me a copy of that book. Then we met once a week to have lunch. Our conversation was about the weather, whether the food was good, and what have you been doing lately? He was asking the questions, and I dared not speak about the film he wanted to do with me. But I got to know things because he used to speak to some friends of mine who were friends of his. They would call me on the phone and tell me that they had had a conversation with Truffaut who said this and that and that. So without his telling me anything, I knew what we were going to do. The script of *Jules and Jim* came out of research by Truffaut and his writer, Jean Gruault, into the writings of Roché. And, truly, the fact that before starting work on the script François had decided that I would be Catherine surely led to lots of decisions in the writing. That's why maybe they focused more on Catherine.

Question: The acting in *Jules and Jim*—I'm thinking particularly of the male roles—doesn't always feel authentic to me. How do you feel about it?

Moreau: Maybe time has worked on the film. That can happen. The last time I saw the film was about five years ago, and I didn't have that impression. While making the film I did not judge the quality of either one man or the other man. Anyway, I don't think acting is acting. I think it's just living in front of the camera; it's not pretending. I wish somebody someday would be able to explain that.

Question: It's common to ask a director how he works with actors. But how did you as an actress work with a director? What help do you look for? What have you learned to help you direct actors?

Moreau: It's very surprising; you're different every time you work with a different director, because it's a different script and a different character. The only way I prepare myself for a film and for a director is to be empty. This means that I do not have any idea in advance; and when I say I'm empty it means I am ready to be filled up. I think an

Three faces of Jeanne Moreau: in Jacques Demy's Bay of the Angels, *Michelangelo Antonioni's* La notte, *and Bertrand Blier's* Going Places.

actor is a medium. Some directors like to prepare you; and not only do they like to prepare you, but now I understand why they're eager to speak. Even if they've been thinking about the film for years, nothing is ever clear enough to them. But when they can relate the film to someone, they bring out new things which they had unconsciously inside.

Some directors do not speak at all. For example, Antonioni doesn't care at all about actors. Maybe he has changed now. Maybe you have heard that he had lots of problems with some actors. Some of them were so unhappy they just left.

When I said that an actor is a medium, it means he's ready to take anything that passes by: indifference, coldness, aggression, warmth, love, hatred—sometimes you're hated. You don't know why. It's as though the director at one point had to carry very violent emotions, and he takes the people who are at his disposal, the people who are on the set.

When I did the casting of my film, I noticed that I went back to where I came from, I went back to the stage. A lot of the actors I have in my film are theater actors. Working with them took me back to the things I had been through. You know, all of us, as soon as we are born, scream for attention, and that's what we do all the rest of our lives. I think that a film set is a place where everybody is eager to give and eager to take, and everybody is very vulnerable.

Question: In Antonioni's film, *La notte*, you seemed devastated by everything going on around you, and this was perfect for the film. I wonder if a director treats actors badly in order to get a certain effect.

Moreau: Sometimes I think that filmmaking is related to a sort of witchcraft. Some directors don't have this quality, but they know how to use the lenses, and they have good technicians around them and their films are not bad. But they don't have that crazy quality which some films have, like the Antonioni film. I think Antonioni was totally unconscious of the atmosphere but he provoked it. Maybe he himself was going through a very special experience related to the film. Maybe it was autobiographical. Anyway, any work of art is always autobiographical when somebody has talent. Unconsciously, Antonioni provoked an incredible, painful atmosphere, and everybody was torn apart on the set, even the crew. *La notte* was the result, so sometimes you have to suffer.

Question: Is it true that *La notte* was shot at night to increase the tension?

Moreau: Well, it was planned like that. The film, after all, was called *La notte*. We had to be on the set at five o'clock in the afternoon to get ready, and we started to shoot around midnight. We used to shoot until around ten o'clock in the morning. We all lived in a hotel, and the maids used to come and knock at the door and want to do the cleaning. I spent my few hours of sleep dreaming I wanted to go to sleep.

Question: You say that you never prepare yourself when you are going to make a film. Does that mean you don't rehearse?

Moreau: The rehearsals I prefer are the ones that are as far as possible from what the scene is going to be at the end. *Sotto voce*. See what I mean? Not really involved, but flirting on the outside. When you're on the set immediately when you are going to act, it's like holding a wild horse. You do not really interfere directly with the material. That's what Bergman felt, too: that you mustn't rehearse

too much. I even dislike to say the exact words, so as to keep things fresh and instinctive and violent, as though they were essential.

Question: When you act in a film, do you need an audience—even if only the people on the set—to project to?

Moreau: That's the witchcraft in the cinema I was talking about. There is something really magical about a set. It's all those lights and that incredible machine which is the camera. When you ask for silence and then you say, "Roll," and then, "Action," something incredible happens. You cannot compare it with an audience.

Question: There is no one beyond those lights you try to reach?

Moreau: No, no, no. You're trying to reach the director, in fact. He's your closest relationship; and though you don't look at him, you feel his presence and his magnetism and his eyes. He's so close to you—it's an incredible marriage. That's why no audience is needed. In fact, it's a very egotistic pleasure. It's really like lovemaking.

Question: I was very impressed with your small role in *Going Places*. How much time did it take?

Moreau: I was in a very strange state when finally I said, "Yes," to that part. I didn't want to do it. But because of Gerard Depardieu, who is in the film—I think he's a marvelous actor, and he's going to be a big star—I agreed. Then I regretted it. I was in such a state of anxiety that I put on weight. I arrived the day before. For this part we shot six days. That's all I can say.

Question: I like *Bay of the Angels*. But I wonder if there was a touch of parody in your role, particularly of certain American actresses?

Moreau: No, no. There was none. I know that some people in this country who saw it thought that there might be a touch of parody, but there was none at all. The blonde girl was not related at all to Marilyn Monroe. It was just because Jacques Demy, the director, was always fascinated with these women he had seen on the screen, and they were always platinum blonde. Those were the ones he preferred, so that's why he asked me to be like that. Something happened in this film, and it's the first time it happened to me and the only time: Demy wrote the dialogue in such a strange way that he forced me to breathe in a very special way. Breathing in a different way I had to move and walk in a different way. Finally, without his telling me anything, I discovered myself with a different voice, and breathing, expressing myself, moving around, using my feet in a different way. That's what gave that woman that broken and indecisive

way. He was responsible for all that. I just let him lead the way.

Question: Did you have any special problems in playing essentially yourself in *Alex in Wonderland*?

Moreau: It's very difficult to answer the question because I enjoy very much being in front of the camera. Maybe I enjoy it because it's painful at the same time. You have to be precise, and you have to do what the director wants you to do. But it wasn't a big problem. I was Jeanne Moreau in a dream, and it was me, and it was not me. I never think too much. I'm not an intellectual.

Question: Elia Kazan is directing you in *The Last Tycoon*. How do you work with him?

Moreau: Kazan met me once and talked about the character I was going to portray. On the set he wants us to rehearse but very casually so he can decide the place of his camera. He gives very few indications before the first take, and he asks for a few little things after the first take.

Question: What role are you playing?

Moreau: I am playing the part of Didi, who is a European film star. Her partner is called Rodriguez, and he is played by Tony Curtis.

Question: Has being an actress before becoming a director helped you or hindered you?

Moreau in Luis Buñuel's screen version of Octave Mirbeau's novel, Diary of a Chambermaid.

Jeanne Moreau with producer Sam Spiegel and Director Elia Kazan on the set of The Last Tycoon.

Moreau: Oh, it's been a very positive thing. I'm sure of this. I'm so aware of the difficulties of the actors and their problems, though as a director you have yours. It's essential for a director to feel—even if you don't understand why—where the problem lies. As a director you must be in two places: You must be outside, and you must be inside. Maybe the easiest thing for me was to be inside, but I was so overwhelmed and so passionate about my film that it became very easy for me to be outside. We'll see the result.

Question: You said that you saw yourself, when acting, as a medium through which a director with a passion to say something on film could express himself. As a director, do you now have this same passion? For example, did the subject of your film inescapably present itself to you?

Moreau: When I started to write, it was all very precise. But the more you write, the more you discover that it brings things out of you. Then there is the autonomy of the characters you have created. At one point you have the impression that you are dealing with very personal matters which give life to characters, and then suddenly the characters get hold of their lives, and they go on. The second step is when you're on the set, and you're working with people, human beings, who are these characters. They take hold of the characters who have already been living their own lives, and then they go somewhere else. It's an incredible transformation. You can discover suddenly you are not making the film you wanted to make. So you have to stick to it with such strength. I thought what Ingmar Bergman said recently was marvelous. He said that he never dealt with power or aggression, that he always dealt with the intimate personality of the actors. The only thing he wanted was to give in order for them to receive and, of course, being very selfish, as all directors are, receive at the same time. That's what I try to do. I read articles about directors who only have a relationship based on power. They want everyone on the set to know that they are the ones who hold the power.

Question: Are you thinking of someone like Hitchcock, who has a reputation for disliking actors?

Moreau: Hitchcock has been like that for years, and he's a very successful director and a very talented director. Why should he change his manners? Maybe this corresponds with a great need which he has inside of him to treat the actors the way he treats them. That's the only explanation I can give. I don't make a judgment. I must admit that if I were asked by Mr. Hitchcock to make a film with him, even knowing that, I would do it. We're masochists, and we want to see exactly how it goes.

Question: Maybe you had the best of both worlds by making *The Bride Wore Black*, which was a Hitchcock type of film but not directed by him.

Moreau: But it was a very unhappy film. It was a very unhappy atmosphere. But I'm not going to tell you all the private stories of all the films I've made.

Question: For your film, what decisions did you make on the use of the camera, on setting up shots?

Moreau: I must tell you that my first meeting with my camera was extraordinary. It was on a set in a studio in Billancourt. There was a very small crew; we were making tests with the makeup on the actresses. The camera was the one I wanted. I didn't have enough money to have Panaflex, but I had an Arriflex with a 300-meter magazine. When I arrived there were only boxes, and when they were opened I was so moved I can't tell you. When I saw this camera with all these lenses and things, I had to go out. I felt like crying; it was incredible. I came back, and I was overwhelmed by fear. I said, "God, what am I going to do?" Then fear goes away. It disappears because you have to do things; you have to be active and make decisions.

You don't have to think about the cute shot. No. You just shoot, and you say, "It's there. The camera has to be there." Sometimes you don't know where you want it to be, and that's when you must be very careful, because you mustn't be afraid to show you don't know. You mustn't be proud. That I felt immediately, because then you can foul up everything. I was lucky enough to have the crew I wanted, and they were free. I had a very good cameraman. I had Alain Resnais's cutter, Alain Resnais's first assistant, his script girl. I thought, God, I'll be all right. I can ask questions sometimes. So I asked questions. And I discovered another thing: That all the answers were different, and the only right one had to come from me. You

feel responsible. I feel I am a grown-up now.

Question: You both act and direct in your film. Was the dual function a problem?

Moreau: It is difficult, but it is not the main problem. Once I had finished shooting, I would prepare the next day with the cameraman in the presence of the key grip, the electrician, the first assistant, and we would decide roughly how we were going to shoot the day after. In fact, when I acted, it allowed me, during the makeup, to concentrate on what the day was going to be like. I made my little sketches, and sometimes I could tell more precisely, or shoot in a better way, the scene for that day.

Question: What are the main differences for you between the work with an American crew and a French crew?

Moreau: With an American crew it's amazing how long it takes to know everyone by name. The crew is so enormous.

Question: Do you have a dream that you still pursue? Has it changed?

Moreau: My dream is the same one I had when I was an adolescent: I wanted to be in films; I wanted to act. When I discovered what life was about, I was very disappointed, and I wanted to be an artist. My dream has stayed the same, and it hasn't changed, and I don't think that my life will be long enough to fulfill that dream. So, let's dream.

Films of Jeanne Moreau

1948—*Dernier amour*
Directed by Jean Stelli
1950—*Meurtres (Three Sinners)*
Directed by Richard Pottier
Pigalle—Saint-Germain-des-Prés
Directed by André Berthomieu
1952—*L'homme de ma vie*
Directed by Guy Lefranc
Il est minuit Docteur Schweitzer
Directed by André Haguet
1953—*Le dortoir des grandes*
Directed by Henri Decoin
Julietta
Directed by Marc Allégret
Touchez pas au Grisbi (Grisbi)
Directed by Jacques Becker
1954—*Secrets d'alcove*
Directed by Henri Decoin
Les intrigantes (Inside a Girls' Dormitory)
Directed by Henri Decoin
La reine Margot
Directed by Jean Dréville
1955—*Les hommes en blanc (The Doctors)*
Directed by Ralph Habib
Gas-Oil
Directed by Gilles Grangier
M'sieur la Caille
Directed by André Pergament
1956—*Le salaire du péché*
Directed by Denys de La Patellière
Jusqu'au dernier
Directed by Pierre Billon
1957—*Les louves*
Directed by Luis Saslavsky
L'étrange Monsieur Steve
Directed by Raymond Bailly
Trois jours à vivre
Directed by Gilles Grangier
Echec au porteur
Directed by Gilles Grangier
Ascenseur pour l'échafaud (Frantic)
Directed by Louis Malle
1958—*Le dos au mur (Back to the Wall)*
Directed by Edouard Molinaro
Les amants (The Lovers)
Directed by Louis Malle
1959—*Les liaisons dangereuses*
Directed by Roger Vadim
Le dialogue des Carmélites (The Carmelites)
Directed by Philippe Agostini
Five Branded Women
Directed by Martin Ritt
1960—*Moderato Cantabile*
Directed by Peter Brook
La notte (The Night)
Michelangelo Antonioni
1961—*Jules et Jim (Jules and Jim)*
Directed by François Truffaut
1962—*Eva*
Directed by Joseph Losey
La Baie des Anges (Bay of the Angels)
Directed by Jacques Demy
Le procès (The Trial)
Directed by Orson Welles
1963—*The Victors*
Directed by Carl Foreman
Le feu follet (The Fire Within)
Directed by Louis Malle
Peau de banane (Banana Peel)
Directed by Marcel Ophuls
1964—*Le journal d'une femme de chambre (Diary of a Chambermaid)*
Directed by Luis Buñuel
The Train
Directed by John Frankenheimer
Mata-Hari, Agent H-21
Directed by Jean-Louis Richard
1965—*The Yellow Rolls-Royce*
Directed by Anthony Asquith
Viva Maria!
Directed by Louis Malle
1966—*Mademoiselle*
Directed by Tony Richardson
Falstaff (Chimes at Midnight)
Directed by Orson Welles
The Sailor from Gibraltar
Directed by Tony Richardson
1967—*Le plus vieux métier du monde (The Oldest Profession)*—("Mademoiselle Mimi")
Directed by Philippe de Broca
La Mariée était en noir (The Bride Wore Black)
Directed by François Truffaut
The Immortal Story
Directed by Orson Welles
1968—*Great Catherine*
Directed by Gordon Flemyng
Le corps de Diane
Directed by Jean-Louis Richard
1969—*Monte Walsh*
Directed by William Fraker
Le petit theatre du Jean Renoir (The Little Theatre of Jean Renoir)
Directed by Jean Renoir
1970—*Alex in Wonderland*
Directed by Paul Mazursky
Comptes à rebours
Directed by Roger Pigaut
1971—*L'humeur vagabonde*
Directed by Edouard Luntz
Chère Louise (Louise)
Directed by Philippe de Broca
1972—*Nathalie Granger*
Directed by Marguerite Duras
Joana o Francesa
Directed by Carlos Diegues
1973—*Je t'aime*
Directed by Pierre Duceppe
Les valseuses (Going Places)
Directed by Bertrand Blier
La race des seigneurs
Directed by Pierre Granier-Deferre
1974—*Creezy*
Directed by Pierre Granier-Deferre
Pleurs
Directed by Jerôme Laperrousaz
Le jardin qui bascule
Directed by Guy Gilles
Souvenirs d'en France
Directed by André Téchiné
1976—*The Last Tycoon*
Directed by Elia Kazan

afi member news

A newsletter from the Public Information Office on the Institute and its activities and programs.

They Came to Praise Him

William Wyler, the speaker said, "lighted the candles of our imagination." At the AFI Life Achievement Award dinner, the candles were lit for the veteran director, and First Lady Betty Ford's tribute was among dozens by colleagues and stars. Wyler is the fourth recipient of the AFI award, called by *The New York Times* "one of the most coveted in Hollywood since it was first bestowed in 1973."

Mrs. Ford, California Senator John Tunney, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, and dozens of Wyler's stars—including Audrey Hepburn, Barbra Streisand, Gregory Peck, Charlton Heston, Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, Henry Fonda, Merle Oberon, Myrna Loy, and Eddie Albert—saluted Wyler's accomplishments. Among the entertainment industry notables who were part of an audience of 1,200 paying tribute to Wyler for his contributions to the art of filmmaking were Billy Wilder, David Lean, Frank Capra, Louis Malle, Milos Foreman, Sidney Kingsley, and King Vidor.

Many of his stars groaned as they reminisced about "twenty-two-take Wyler's" demanding reshooting techniques. But uniformly they praised his craftsmanship and their remarks underlined the sentiments of AFI Director George Stevens, Jr.:

"Knowing that art is not an end in itself, but a means of addressing humanity, William Wyler has reached into the hearts of audiences by filling his films with the concerns of mankind expressed in stories of love, hope, fear, and faith." Citing Wyler's preference to remain in the background of his films, Stevens said, "That ability to hide—to never let the brush strokes show, to place the poem on the pedestal, not the poet—is William Wyler's special grace....He preferred his work, his art, to himself—which is, after all, the unmistakable gesture of the artist."

Our Day—July 12

National Film Day returns to selected theaters on July 12—a cooperative effort by film exhibitors and distributors to focus attention on the motion picture and its role in American culture and to raise contributions for the works of AFI. Theaters across the country are being asked to donate half of the day's revenues to support AFI, and studios have been solicited to put several of their major releases into the National Film Day theaters. The first seven motion picture companies to join Film Day '76 are American International Pictures, Avco Embassy, Columbia, Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, United Artists, and Warner Bros. Salah Hassanein, president of United Artists Eastern Theaters, has organized National Film Day on behalf of the AFI Board of Trustees. Hassanein is assembling a committee of industry leaders to assume the task of coordinating National Film Day with the distributors and the nation's 14,000 theaters.

Watch Your Mailbox

As an AFI member, you are part of a growing family of film devotees—and the clan is expected to increase by more than 5,000 this spring as the result of a national membership drive. AFI membership has already doubled since issue number one of *American Film* was published six months ago. The growth gives AFI an everbroadening base of public involvement, and membership dues help AFI meet a matching grant of the National Endowment for the Arts, which furthers the progress of the Institute's activities.

This month's letters from George Stevens, Jr., and Charlton Heston to prospective members point out these interests and other values of AFI membership. If you receive an invitation to join and are already a member, feel free to pass the information along to friends and colleagues who are interested in films and television.

Television and the Magoo Factor

People are pulled from the street for test reactions to new TV programs. The golden mean is an old cartoon.

Roland Flamini

You get used to funny phone calls in Los Angeles. Real estate brokers who announce they have an avid buyer for your "beautiful home," which is not on the market. Political canvassers, religious proselytizers, market researchers, phone-to-phone salesmen. Once I got an obscene phone call from a woman who ended up by apologizing that she had the wrong number. (Paid obscene phone calls were a fad among movie people at the time.) In the sprawling metropolis the phone is a widespread method of transacting business that might elsewhere be conducted in person; you quickly become expert at sifting out the cranks from the genuine articles. So when, out of the blue, I was phoned by a man who said he worked for Audience Studies Inc., operators of the Preview House theater in Los Angeles and others like it in Chicago and New York, and invited to "an interesting evening" helping to rate a new TV series for one of the networks I accepted. My experience told me this was the real thing (but what would it have told me in New York, I wonder).

A few nights later, I am one of about four hundred people standing in line outside a modern, marble structure on Sunset Boulevard that says Preview House in brass letters on the wall, but gives no outward indication of being a theater. In fact, it looks like a bank. The people around me either have been invited by phone, like myself, or have been handed invitation cards, not unlike formal party invitations, outside large supermarkets. Ostensibly, we are a microcosm of the great viewing public, or so we are told later. Certainly, we are a mixed bag, drawn from all over the city. Some are Chicanos who speak very little English, but presumably that too reinforces the representative nature of the group.

Even before we are seated in the auditorium we are put to work on a multicolored sheaf of forms and questionnaires. The green form lists well-known brands of soap and perfume that have to be numbered in order of preference; the red form contains a column of names of leading TV stars that have to be matched up to another column of shows in which they appear; the white form asks for personal data, including occupation and level of edu-

cation. I say I am a taxidermist with a degree from Botswana University and lie about my age. Out of the corner of my eye I see that the man in front of me, who has already volunteered that he works in a bank, has described himself as a doctor. So much for the demographic mix.

Inside the theater a further process of selection takes place whereby half the audience is assigned to the middle section. The seats in this section, explains an MC, who has suddenly materialized in front of the screen, are fitted with "little black dial gadgets" that are "a unique way of getting a person's opinion." Flurry of activity as we look for our gadgets. Small enough to fit into the palm of the hand, the device is attached to a wire that disappears into the left arm rest. There is an indicator that can, with a flick of the finger, be pointed at any one of five ratings on the small dial face—very dull, dull, normal, good, very good. Laboriously, as if addressing a group of dim-witted children, the MC explains the device and urges the audience to register their reaction to what they are about to see on the screen by turning the indicator at frequent intervals. The gadgets, he says, are hooked up to electronic equipment in a glass booth at the back of the auditorium above the audience, where network staffers are waiting to monitor our impressions. We begin to feel important. Eat your heart out, Norman Lear.

"Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman," "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," and "All in the Family" tested poorly (low Magoos) and were almost abandoned.

To practice using the gadget we see first a Mr. Magoo cartoon. The antics of the blind, batty millionaire turn out to be funnier than the comedy pilot that follows. It is about two middle-class suburban couples and stars Gloria de Haven and, if memory serves, Bill Bixby. The big laugh is supposed to come when Gloria de Haven's mildly bigoted husband becomes ill at a party and the doctor called to the house turns out to be a black woman. I hit *very dull* very fast. A handful of commercials are also on the bill, including a perfume commercial with movie star Katharine Ross. Overwhelmed by the endless flow of forms to fill—twelve in all—numbed by the MC's repetitious routine, bored by what was being shown on the screen, I develop a throbbing headache. A handful of more courageous souls actually walk out. At the end of the show my headlong dash for the exit is checked by a young woman who informs me that I have been selected to take part in a small "discussion" about the pilot we have just seen. For a split second I teeter on the brink of submission; then I dash into the night.

Every year, thousands accept Audience Studies Inc.'s invitation to fill the Preview House, diligently turning the indicators and filling in the forms. But how many of them realize, I wonder, that they are helping a process of selection that has become the center of a growing controversy between the writers and producers who make the pilots and the network executives empowered to put them on the air or to turn them down? Writers and producers argue that "testing"—as television calls it—has become too powerful—no longer a tool, but a mechanical final authority on which to base network programming decisions. They maintain that it perpetuates the whole derivative nature of most prime-time shows; it discourages those who want to break away from the dead weight of the old successful formulas to explore new directions and new styles. Anything different, they point out, fares badly in such testing procedures as the one in use at Preview House.

Though network executives deny the charge, many of the better suppliers of prime-time programs insist that network testing methods are one major reason why innovative programs are little more than a colony in the continent of drivel.

The controversy brought me back to Preview House some time later, not as a guinea pig, but as a reporter. On this occasion, I watched from the glass-paneled control room while another comedy pilot was being shown. A needle, wired to the two hundred gadgets in the auditorium below, traced the audience's peaks of appreciation and valleys of disappointment on graphed paper. Jokes made the needle go up, exposition or character development brought it down. At the same time, a computer

spewed out a printout of this reaction expressed as a demographic breakdown by age, education, profession, and so on. The writers of the pilot huddled in a corner staring at the needle and twitching in rhythm to it. Writers rarely pay a second visit to the Preview House. "It was a horrible experience. I wanted to jump through the plate-glass window," recalled Susan Harris, who created the promising, but short-lived situation comedy "Fay." "Once you've gone once, you stay away."

The show opened with the same Magoo cartoon, which turned out to be more than just a method of familiarizing people with the rating devices attached to the seats. On the contrary, Mr. Magoo plays a much bigger role in the whole evening than the audience suspects. Audiences differ greatly from one night to the next, and the Magoo cartoon is the constant factor that established the statistical norm. When Mr. Magoo goes flailing down the mountainside toward the end of the cartoon, the needle will register anywhere between 7.6 and 8.2 on the graph. On this particular evening it read 7.2. "Tonight, we have a low Magoo," gravely remarked the network research man in the booth. "We'll have to adjust the scores accordingly."

In a very real sense, the pilot was competing against a twenty-year-old cartoon of no particular distinction. Even the scores for the shows—which rarely, if ever, exceed those registered by Mr. Magoo himself—are known in television as "Magoos." A pilot is considered to have done well if its average score is between 5.1 and 6.3 Magoos. The data from the computer, the graph, and the questionnaires are evaluated by the network research department and passed on to the program executives who decide the fate of the show.

The concept of testing TV shows before putting them on the air has its origins in advertising, not show business. In fact, the language of television owes more to Madison Avenue than it does to Hollywood. Producers and network executives talk of a show "testing well" and discuss the "demographics" of its appeal. The underlying philosophy is that a new show is a product, like a new detergent or breakfast food, and its impact on the market can be determined in advance in the same manner. Audience Studies Inc., like most of the other firms testing TV pilots, still derives the major part of its $8 million business from testing commercials. "Because of the potential loss of revenue the cost of being wrong about a commercial—or a show for that matter—is gigantic," says one Madison Avenue executive.

To reap the huge benefits of being right the networks spend large sums annually on testing (it costs about $1,500 to test a thirty-minute show at the Preview House in Los Angeles). While ABC and NBC rely heavily on ASI, CBS has its own testing facilities along the same lines as Preview House, but designed for smaller audiences of about twenty with an enlarged TV screen instead of a movie screen. NBC now also tests pilots over cable television in selected cities collecting viewer reactions in telephone interviews. The networks also from time to time have resorted to a procedure known as "concept testing" to test an idea before there is even a script. This method was much favored by ABC in the early days of its "Movie of the Week" feature. In "concept testing" a one-sentence plot is tried out on a carefully chosen sample: "A plane crashes on a desert island, and all the passengers go blind? Would you watch that movie on television?" If the answer is yes, the picture goes into production. If the answer is overwhelmingly no, the concept is either ditched or changed and tested again: "A plane crashes on a desert island, and half the passengers become cannibals. Would you watch *that* movie on television?"

Whatever executives say to the contrary, the object of testing a show is exactly the same as testing a new brand of soap to determine the demand. If the soap tests well, it promises to have good sales; if a pilot tests well, the network can expect it to get good ratings. The Neilsen rating system of 1,200 households whose identity is a closely guarded secret and whose TV sets are connected by special phone lines to the central Neilsen computer in Dunedin, Florida, is taken to reflect accurately the unarticulated preferences of the country's 69.8 million American households with TV sets. It is an extreme example of domination by numbers. Every week, the Neilsen ratings are published and producers reach for their valiums. Any show that consistently fails to make a respectable showing by coming within the first forty is virtually doomed to cancellation. (There have been occasional exceptions: Despite poor ratings "The Waltons" was reprieved because of pressure from the critics, and thus had time to build up a large and faithful following.)

The reason why ratings exert this tyrannical hold on network programming is purely financial. Television advertising is sold on a cost-per-thousand basis. This means that one minute of prime time at the height of the TV season will sell for about $5 per thousand homes. To take a practical example: This season, "Kojak" is averaging a 28 rating of the audience in its time slot. Each rating point is agreed by the networks and advertisers to equal 698,000 TV households, or 1 percent of the 69.8 million, so it is assumed than an average of 19,544,000 homes are tuned in to the bald New York police lieutenant's exploits every Sunday night. CBS could therefore sell off advertising time on "Kojak" at $97,720 a minute. However, flat rates for prime time are unusual in television; advertisers are offered a variety of discounts and block booking rates, and the amount charged is probably considerably less.

Recently, a number of leading figures working in television such as Norman Lear and Richard Levinson, joint creator with William Link of "Columbo" and other series, formed the Caucus for Producers, Writers and Directors, dedicated to raising the standards of TV programming. Network pilot testing, of course, is one of their princi-

pal targets. Caucus spokesmen accuse network executives of taking refuge behind statistics to avoid making decisions. "They're afraid to use their own opinions so they take it to Preview House," says Carl Reiner. Levinson adds skeptically, "The networks say it's more input, but I think it's more important than they're willing to admit. Once this information goes east over the Rockies it takes on a great deal more importance than it deserves."

Preview House, Los Angeles

Robert Wood, president of CBS Television, refutes the charge that statistics have him and other network executives in thrall. "If people think that with testing we just wait to push a button, the computer goes *rrrrrr*, out comes a tab run: Boom—this show will work, that show won't, that's crazy. I've taken testing results, and I've said, I don't care what they say. It's well done. It's well done, and let's run the risk that it will succeed on the air." What is disturbing about this statement is the implied admission that a decision that runs contrary to the testing results constitutes a risk. In Wood's mind, testing pilots is obviously enshrined as the accepted order. But the fatal flaw in testing is that test audiences tend not to respond to new ideas, no matter how good those ideas may be; they respond better to recognizable formulas. So test results continue to give network executives justification to perpetuate the tired old fare year after year—the excuse to make nondecisions. As Caucus President William Eckstein says, "Testing depresses originality."

There are few enough examples of shows that tested poorly but were aired anyway, but three of them make nonsense of the whole system. They are "All in the Family," "Mary Tyler Moore," and—more recently—"Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman." Test audiences didn't know what to make of Archie Bunker's bigotry and the "All in the Family" pilot scored very low Magoos. But this was one occasion when Wood was persuaded to "run the risk" and the show was put on the schedule. Slowly—very slowly at first—it gained popularity, and Bunker is now immovably fixed as a social institution. "Mary Tyler Moore's" independent career woman was also an alien character, and the pilot did poorly on the Magoo scale. But CBS had committed itself to air the show before the test was made, and the network had no choice but to stick to its commitment. All three networks tested "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman" with very poor results. So all three networks played it safe and refused to put Norman Lear's nighttime soap opera on the air. Lear then bypassed the networks and sold the show to a number of individual stations throughout the country; in many of them, "Mary Hartman" pulls bigger audiences than the eleven o'clock news.

Caucus members say their fight against pilot testing is not helped by the fact that some Hollywood TV writers have capitulated and write shows designed to compete with Mr. Magoo. The appearance of a child or dog in a sitcom will invariably send the needle up; character development brings it down. In dramatic pilots, violence and car chases produce the Magoos, exposition footage doesn't. "The ideal dramatic pilot contains nothing but action," says one TV writer. "If the private eye has to explain anything, he'd better be doing something interesting at the same time, like walking a tightrope over Niagara Falls or screwing his female client. Long explanations—no matter how fascinating—are almost guaranteed to send the pilot down the toilet."

Another writer maintains that "if you had a dog in every scene and played an old favorite like 'Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head' throughout the whole thing you'd get terrific Magoos." It is demonstrably risky to try to be too different in a pilot. Some time ago, Sam Denoff and Bill Persky wrote one called "The Boys," based on their own experiences as veteran TV comedy writers. If seventeen years in the business had taught them anything, it was that the pilot's opening sequence of black comedy jokes about funerals would not test well, but (Denoff says) "creatively it was right." Sure enough, the show tested poorly at CBS. Later, the network executive who had agreed to test it told them it would have done well and been bought by CBS if only they had sacrificed the offbeat opening.

Network executives, for their part, feel that testing has become a handy whipping boy for disgruntled writers whose pilots don't get bought, and there is a measure of truth in that too. But Levinson feels that testing keeps mediocre writers in business. "God knows we writers make mistakes, but the networks should let us make them. After a while, if we continue to make them we'll stop working." Such a solution is unthinkable while the networks remain dedicated to the single-minded pursuit of a sole objective, namely giving the sponsors the maximum audience.

While the Great Testing Debate rages back and forth, the TV audience has declined (by more than two percent) for the first time since the fifties. The producers and writers cite this drop as a powerful argument in favor of innovative programs. But one wonders why the networks don't simply run over and over that Mr. Magoo cartoon. ■

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Stranger in a Studio

Raymond Chandler and Hollywood

Part Two

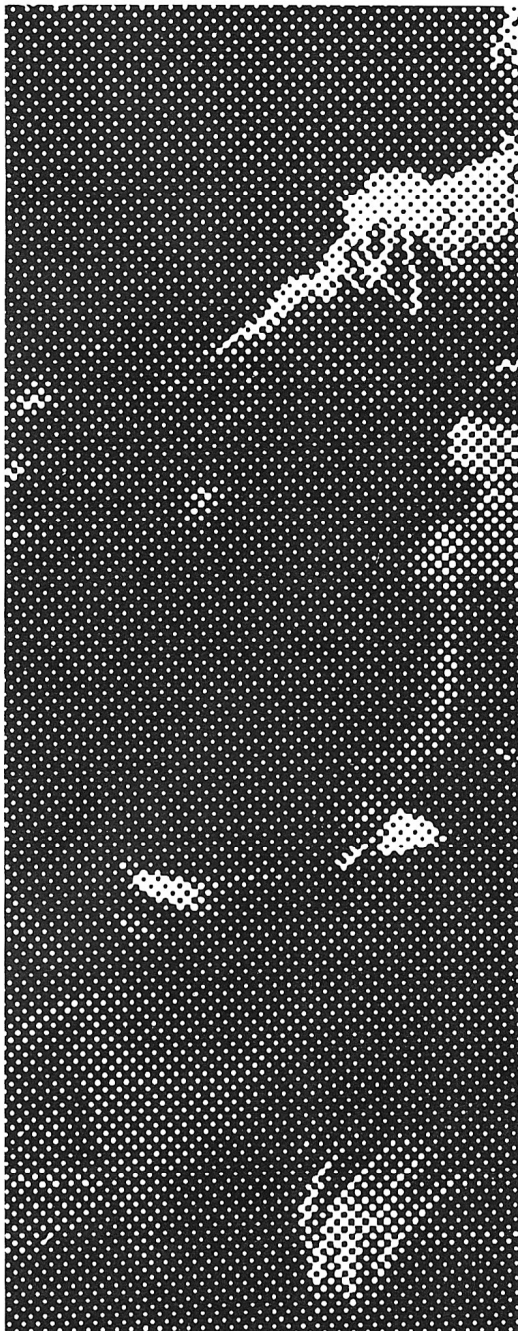
Frank MacShane

In 1948, Raymond Chandler gave up screenwriting, or so he thought, and moved to La Jolla, a town he and his wife, Cissy, enjoyed for its quiet elegance and the politeness of its inhabitants, whose lack of aggressiveness was a pleasant change from Los Angeles. Yet, it was not long before he wrote his editor at Houghton Mifflin, Dale Warren, that "the news from here is rotten. Nervous, tired, discouraged, sick of the chauffeur-and-Cadillac atmosphere, bored to hell with the endless struggle to get help, disgusted with my lack of prescience in not seeing that this kind of life is unsuited to my temperament."

He spent a good deal of his time in La Jolla writing articles for the *Atlantic*, some, inevitably, dealing with his Hollywood experience. By 1948, he knew much more about filmmaking than when he had begun screenwork in 1943. Above all, he knew that Hollywood was primarily a "business" or an "industry" in which commercial values predominated. In such an atmosphere, Chandler wrote, the writer may have "brief enthusiasms, but they are destroyed before they can flower. People who can't write tell him how to write. He meets clever and interesting people and may even form lasting friendships, but all this is incidental to his proper business of writing. The wise screenwriter is he who wears his second-best suit, artistically speaking, and doesn't take things too much to heart." Chandler even had enough detachment to see the humor of the situation, and he enjoyed recording one of the absurd "Goldwynisms" for which Samuel Goldwyn was famous: "Talking about a script deal he pounded the desk and shouted, 'I'm sick and tired of writers chiseling on producers in Hollywood. So here is the deal. You can either take it or like it.'"

Despite his skepticism, Chandler was fascinated by the possibilities of film. To underline the conflict between commercial and artistic values in the movies, he wrote an article called "Oscar Night in Hollywood," which was published in the *Atlantic* in June of 1948. His first point was that the Oscars given by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences go only to films that are commercially successful. Why then, he asked, does anyone bother with the vulgar ballyhoo of the Academy Awards? "The only answer I can think of is that the motion picture is an art. I say this with a very small voice." He had been saying it with a more forceful voice to the various directors and producers he dealt with in Hollywood, but he accomplished little. Nevertheless, he learned who the important people were in making a film. Mainly, they were the technicians—the cameraman, the lighting man, and above all the editor, who cut and pieced the scenes together to make them appear in a natural flow. As a writer bored with the pretensions of many directors, Chandler knew that the technicians often faced impossible tasks. "The best cutter in Hollywood cannot correct a botched job of directing; he can't make scenes flow when they are shot staccato, without reference to their movement on film together. If the cutter wants to make a dissolve to cover an abrupt transition, he can't do it unless he has the film to combine for the dissolve."

Chandler sometimes wondered whether the trouble with most films was just that "they're simply no longer a novelty. The medium, the things it can do have lost the sting. We're back where silent films were when Warners bought the Vitaphone." But in his *Atlantic* article, he was more optimistic. After commenting on the high quality of Roberto Rossellini's *Open City* and Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*, he said that the motion picture was not like literature or the theater. Rather, it was similar to music "in the sense that its finest effects can be independent of precise meaning, that its transitions can be more eloquent than its high-lit scenes, and that its dissolves and camera movements, which cannot be censored, are far more emotionally effective than its plots, which can. Not only is the motion picture an art," he continued, making the main point of his article, "but it is the one entirely new art that has been evolved on this planet for hundreds



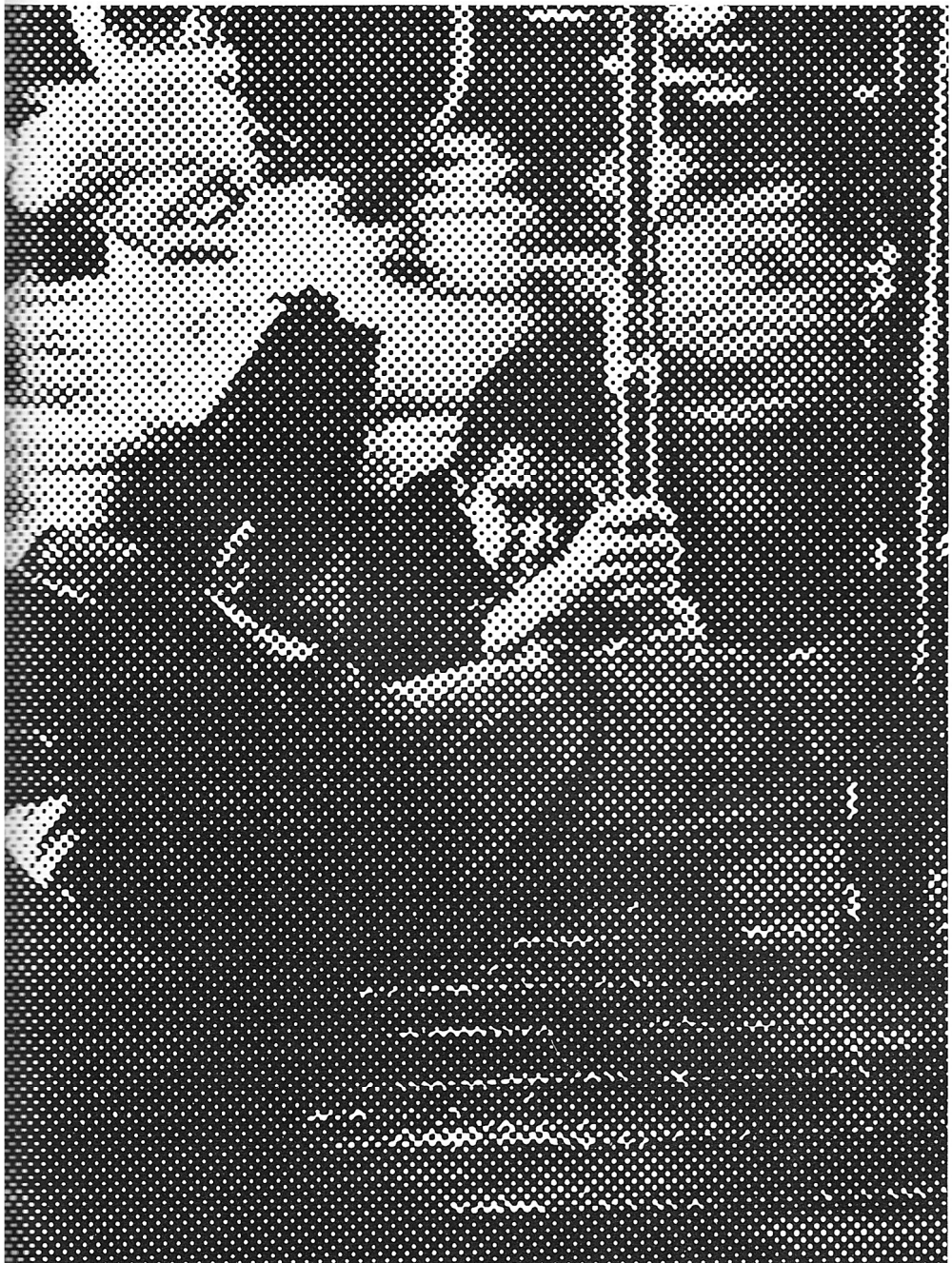
of years. It is the only art at which we of this generation have any possible chance to greatly excel."

In order to produce income for living in La Jolla, Chandler spent a great deal of time trying to arrange for a radio show and a later one on television to be based on his work. Since it would be a serial, the idea was to have Philip Marlowe as the central character and invent new episodes about him. (Radio shows based on Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade and Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason had already been produced in this fashion.) Chandler made negotiations difficult because he insisted on approving the script. He believed that Marlowe as a character was an important commercial property, and he did not want to have him ineptly introduced to the wide audience of radio listeners. "My idea about the Philip Marlowe series is that it would have to live on its dialogue," he wrote. "There just isn't anything else to distinguish it from any show of the type that the usual hacks could think up. The plots of these shows don't matter; they're just an excuse for people to go places and say things, but the things they say are all-important. The dialogue has to have sparkle."

In 1947, Chandler's agent at the time, H. N. Swanson, had sold a Marlowe program to the National Broadcasting Company as a summer replacement for the Bob Hope show. Van Heflin was selected to play the role of Marlowe and Milton Geiger wrote the script. Chandler was so nervous about its success he asked Erle Stanley Gardner to listen to it. Gardner told him he thought the program was better than most others of the kind, but he was bothered by the first-person narration. A week later, he explained what he meant. "I listened to the Marlowe program last night and found it rather difficult to follow. It was so crisp, so fast moving that I couldn't relax and keep up with it. I had to strain my attention to keep the program from going off and leaving me.

"I felt as though I had listened to a mystery book which had been compressed into a thirty-minute dramatization." The critic John Crosby agreed, for he noted that "if plots get any more abbreviated, they'll be doing *War and Peace* on a fifteen-minute show and have time left over for the commercial."

The show was not renewed for the fall season because MGM wouldn't let Van Heflin continue. Chandler did nothing about reviving it until he changed his literary agent and found himself represented by Ray Stark, Carl Brandt's Hollywood specialist. He went to Los Angeles to consult Stark, and the trip awakened his old mixed feelings about the place. "These Hollywood people are fantastic when you have been away for a while," he wrote. "In their presence any calm sensible remark sounds faked. Their conversation is a mess of shopworn superlatives interrupted by four telephone calls to the sentence." He got on well with Stark and reported that "everybody in his bagnio is nice." Nevertheless, something was wrong. "I came away depressed. I really don't know why. Perhaps it's just Beverly Hills. It was such a nice place before the Phoenicians took it over. Now it's just a setting for an enormous confidence racket." Despite his reservations, Chandler made it clear to Stark that he was primarily concerned with the quality of the script, which he considered the key to the show's success. "I would rather have an expensive



Farley Granger, Robert Walker during the climactic carousel fight in Strangers on a Train.

writer and cheap actors than a name star and a cheap writer." The point, he explained, was that "Philip Marlowe is supposed to have a unique quality, and he is all I have to sell."

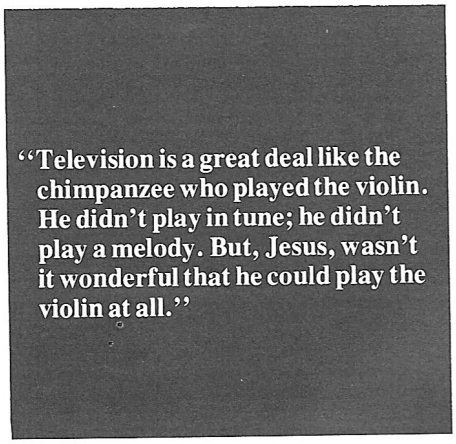
Chandler was sufficiently concerned about the matter to write out a series of suggestions to be passed on to whoever wrote the series. The problem with a first-person character, he said, was that he tended to dominate and become offensive. "To avoid that you must not always give him the punch line or the exit line. Not even often. Let the other characters have the toppers. Leave him without a gag. A devastating crack loses a lot of its force when it doesn't provoke any answer, when the other man just rides with the punch. Then you have to top it yourself or give ground." Chandler said that Marlowe's wisecracks "should be jerked out of him emotionally" rather than be self-conscious and that "any effect of gloating" should be avoided.

Stark succeeded in selling the "Adventures of Philip Marlowe" to the Columbia Broadcasting System in September of 1948 at a weekly rate of $250, to be increased to $400, should the program find a commercial sponsor.

The program did well and earned good listener ratings, the highest of those sustained by the network. Chandler was satisfied with the program, although he would sometimes pretend otherwise, as when he remarked, "The character (let us keep this a secret or they might stop paying me) has about as much relation to Marlowe as I have to Winnie the Pooh."

After Chandler's novel, *The Little Sister,* was published, Stark arranged for a live TV broadcast of the story. He had already begun to try to put the Marlowe series on television as well. CBS made a pilot fim, but was unable to find a sponsor for it, although the radio program continued as before. Chandler was always involved in these negotiations. Although he admired Stark's energy, he had doubts when the radio series was sold to Century Artists, a packaging company in which Stark had an interest, rather than directly to one of the networks. He was also too tough a Hollywood negotiator to believe that because television was new, he should not charge high prices for his work, as Stark suggested he do. "You can't sell a property for a cheap price to cheap people and expect it to be used for anything but a cheap purpose," he explained. "The real question is, does that matter. I rather think it does, somehow."

Chandler's contempt for television affected his attitude toward it. He thought it lacked good camera work, good directing, and good scripts. Like everybody else, he was also offended by the commercials; he used a "blabb-off," a device that cut off the sound during the advertisements, but



it didn't help much. "I've spent a little time lately looking at television for the first time," he wrote in 1950, "and my opinion is that the people who look at television for any length of time and with any regularity have not ceased to read. They never began. It's a great deal like the chimpanzee who played the violin. He didn't play it in tune; he didn't play anything recognizable as a melody; he didn't hold the bow right; he didn't finger correctly. But, Jesus, wasn't it wonderful that he could play the violin at all."

After two years, the radio show was dropped. At this point, Chandler was engaged in a quarrel with Warner Bros., which also involved Stark. The negotiations went badly, and so on the first of December, Chandler wrote to Carl Brandt to say that he no longer wished to be represented by Ray Stark and that he intended to return to Swanson. Chandler changed agents mainly because of personality conflicts. About Swanson, he wrote, "You can reach out and touch him. He's substantial. He's there. Stark is like a flickering light reflected on a wall. That is how he affects me. I am not questioning his abilities, nor am I suggesting that there is anything he should have done for me that he has not done in the way of disposing of anything I wrote or getting me better terms. My position quite simply is that I like Swanie, that I have known him for a long time, that I know where I am with him."

Chandler believed that television was in the hands of people who did B-pictures in the early days and who controlled radio. "The writing, I suppose, is no worse than it was in lots of radio shows, but by being more intrusive it *seems* worse. If you have spent fifteen years building up a character, a fairly complicated character, you can't deliver him to the sort of people who do these shows. I don't think the plots are terribly important. But I think the actor and the dialogue are very important—so much so that if I were offered a TV show (which I have not been), I would have to demand approval of the actor playing Philip Marlowe and also script approval. I simply can't afford to have this character murdered by a bunch of yucks."

When CBS canceled the Marlowe radio show in October, Chandler began to think that a packaging corporation like Ray Stark's Century Artists was perhaps necessary after all to keep a show on the air. The networks wanted too many options. "The idea of tying a man up for ten years and then feeding him dog biscuits strikes me as a little thick," he grumbled to Edgar Carter, Swanson's associate. With a touch of sour grapes he added, "Perhaps the show was too good, perhaps not enough people were slugged or knifed or shot. There are a half-dozen shows of this type on the air, it seems to me, which have been

on for years and have been sponsored and are solid, and not one of them worth listening to."

Finally he decided to pull together his feelings about agents in an article that was published in the *Atlantic* under the memorable title of "Ten Percent of Your Life." What most influenced his writing in this piece was his memory of working with Ray Stark in Hollywood. He had already warned Brandt of the dangers inherent in the new kind of incorporated agency which is really a talent trust with a variety of clients—writers, actors, producers, directors. In the *Atlantic* article, Chandler dealt briefly with the traditional literary agency and then turned to the situation in Hollywood. "This brings me, not too eagerly," he began, "to the orchid of the profession—the Hollywood agent—a sharper, shrewder, and a good deal less scrupulous practitioner. Here is a guy who really makes with the personality. He dresses well and drives a Cadillac—or someone drives it for him. He has an estate in Beverly Hills or Bel-Air. He has been known to own a yacht, and by yacht I don't mean a cabin cruiser. On the surface he has a good deal of charm, because he needs it in his business. Underneath he has a heart as big as an olive pit."

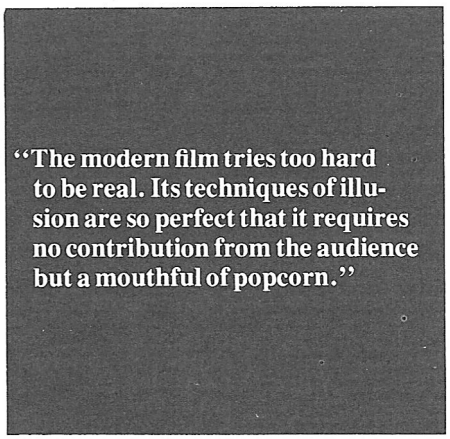
The crux of Chandler's argument is that the extraordinary profits to be made in Hollywood brought in unscrupulous individuals whose only interest was a fast buck. "The law allowed him to incorporate, which, in my opinion was a fatal mistake. It destroyed all semblance of the professional attitude and the professional responsibility to the individual client." The consequence, even in the early 1950s, was that the clients, whether writers, directors, or actors, "became the raw material of a speculative business. He (the agent) wasn't working for you. You were working for him."

It was not until 1950 that Chandler finally agreed to do a film script of Patricia Highsmith's novel, *Strangers on a Train*, which was to be directed by Alfred Hitchcock for Warner Bros. "Why am I doing it?" he asked rhetorically. "Partly because I thought I might like Hitch, which I do, and partly because one gets tired of saying no, and someday I might want to say yes and not get asked."

Chandler was also interested in the theme of hidden guilt that lies at the heart of Highsmith's novel. Two strangers meet on a train. One of them, a rising architect named Guy Haines, would be happier if his wife were out of the way so that he could pursue his career and remarry; the other, Charles Bruno, a drunken and psychotic mother's boy, wishes his father were dead so he could inherit the family fortune. The two men have lunch on the train, and each tells the other his story. Bruno then suggests they swap murders: Guy would kill Bruno's father, and Bruno would kill Guy's wife. Neither would be caught because there was no motive to link the murderer to his victim. Guy is horrified and dismisses Bruno as a lunatic. But Bruno kills Guy's wife. The rest of the novel is devoted to Bruno's attempts to blackmail Guy into fulfilling his side of the "bargain."

Hitchcock knew that the novel had to be tightened up for screen treatment. He and Whitfield Cook, who had just previously written *Stage Fright* for him, turned Guy into a prominent tennis player since tennis is readily filmed and contains an element of suspense. The father of Guy's girl friend is made a senator instead of a millionaire in order to create a sharper contrast between Bruno's anarchic actions and the laws of society. Finally, the setting of the film is reduced to Forest Hills and Washington instead of being spread all over the country as in the novel.

These changes had all been made by the time Chandler signed a contract with Warner Bros. in early July to complete the script. His salary was to be $2,500 a week with a five-week guarantee. Chandler's contract allowed him to work at home, and so Hitchcock drove down to La Jolla for story conferences. Chandler hated "these god-awful jabber sessions which seem to be an inevitable although painful part of the picture business." Although he wouldn't work at the studio, he also disliked Hitchcock's intrusion into his house, and this made him sarcastic and disagreeable. One day, while waiting at the front door of the house for Hitchcock to get out of his limousine, Chandler remarked to his secretary: "Look at that fat bastard trying to get out of his car!" The secretary warned him that he could be heard. "What do I care?" replied Chandler. Hitchcock also found the meetings a strain and later recalled, "We'd sit together, and I would say, 'Why not do it this way?' and he'd answer, 'Well, if you can puzzle it out, what do you need me for?' "



Despite these difficulties, Chandler finished a first treatment by the eighteenth of July. Aside from transforming an introspective novel into a script suitable for filming, he had to face the question of plausibility. He did not think that the audience would believe Guy capable of committing a murder, and so he changed the script in a fundamental way. Guy pretends that he will murder Bruno's father, but he really plans to tell him that his son is psychotic and in need of medical attention.

The scene in which Guy tells Bruno that he will fulfill his "promise" to kill his father of necessity caused him the most trouble, as he noted in the course of writing his second treatment:

"I nearly went crazy myself trying

MGM star Van Heflin was the first actor to impersonate Chandler's Philip Marlowe on the weekly radio show.

to block out this scene. I hate to say how many times I did it. It's darn near impossible to write, because consider what you have to put over:

"1) A perfectly decent young man (Guy) agrees to murder a man he doesn't know, has never seen, in order to keep a maniac from giving himself away and from tormenting the nice young man.

"2) From a character point of view, the audience will not believe the nice young man is going to kill anybody, or has any idea of killing anybody.

"3) Nevertheless, the nice young man has to convince Bruno and a reasonable percentage of the audience that what he is about to do is logical and inevitable. This conviction may not outlast the scene, but it has to be there, or else what the hell are the boys talking about?

"4) All through this scene (supposing it can be written this way) we are flirting with the ludicrous. If it is not written and played exactly right, it will be absurd. The reason for this is that the situation actually is ludicrous in its essence, and this can only be overcome by developing a sort of superficial menace, which really has nothing to do with the business at hand.

"5) Or am I still crazy?"

Chandler's solution is to have Bruno do most of the talking. His remarks are disjointed, ranging from fury to self-pity, and this hint of madness gives the scene the "menace" Chandler referred to. As for Guy, he mainly asks questions and nods his head in agreement or gives noncommittal grunts of "Uh-huh." It is a clever piece of writing, but fundamentally specious for the reasons Chandler cited.

Whenever Chandler sent a few pages of script to Hitchcock, he would also write a letter emphasizing the need for verisimilitude and logical exposition. He was convinced that Patricia Highsmith had not bothered herself much about these concerns. But the problem he faced also led him to consider the fundamental differences between fiction and screenwriting:

"The question I should really like to have answered, although I don't expect an answer to it in this lifetime, is why in the course of nailing the frame of a film together so much energy and thought are invariably expended, and have to be expended, in exactly this sort of contest between a superficial reasonableness and a fundamental idiocy. Why do film stories always have to have this element of the grotesque? Whose fault is it? Is it anybody's fault? Or is it something inseparable from the making of motion pictures? Is it the price you pay for trying to make a dream look as if it really happened? I think possibly it is.

"When you read a story, you accept its implausibilities and extravagances because they are no more fantastic than the conventions of the medium itself. But when you look at real people, moving against a real background, and hear them speaking real words, your imagination is anesthetized. You accept what you see and hear, but you do not complement it from the resources of your imagination. The motion picture is like a picture of a lady in a half-piece bathing suit. If she wore a few more clothes, you might be intrigued. If she wore no clothes at all, you might be shocked. But the way it is, you are occupied with noticing that her knees are too bony and her toenails too large. The modern film tries too hard to be real. Its techniques of illusion are so perfect that it requires no contribution from the audience but a mouthful of popcorn.

"The more real you make Guy and Bruno, the more unreal you make their relationship, the more it stands in need of rationalization and justification. You would like to ignore this and pass on, but you can't. You have to face it, because you have deliberately brought the audience to the point of realizing that what this story is about is the horror of an absurdity become real—an absurdity (please notice because this is very important) which falls just short of being impossible. If you wrote a story about a man who woke up in the morning with three arms, your story would be about what happened to him as a result of this extra arm. You would not have to justify his having it. That would be the premise. But the premise of this story is not that a nice young man might in certain circumstances murder a total stranger just to appease a lunatic. That is the end result. The premise is that if you shake hands with a maniac, you may have sold your soul to the devil."

The trap posed by this central unlikelihood is never evaded, and in the final script Chandler simply walks around it and in place of probability presents picturesque scenes. The low quality of Chandler's shooting script may be due to the uncertainties he felt about his work. Chandler was known as a dialogue writer, but the dialogue of this script is simply embarrassing. Everything is overstated and blatant. Relationships between people are so blunt as to make the script a caricature of human behavior. Many of the minor parts are satisfactory, but the major scenes are ab-

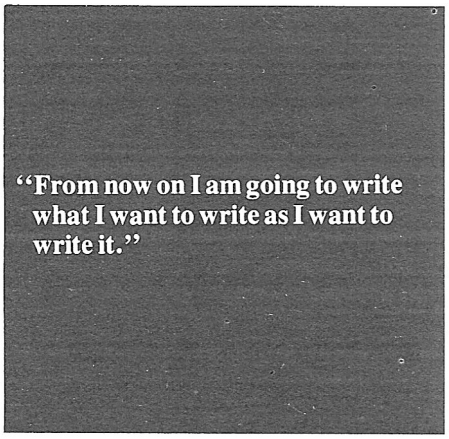
surd. It is curious, but the faults may be due to Chandler's having to work from another writer's model: It is always easier to write dialogue for characters you have invented yourself. You know how they speak. Moreover, in his fiction, Chandler's dialogue depends a good deal on the surrounding narrative and descriptive prose. Naked, in a screenplay, it is less convincing.

When Hitchcock received Chandler's final script, he was unhappy with it: "The work he did was no good, and I ended up with Czenzi Ormonde, a woman writer, who was one of Ben Hecht's assistants." But if Chandler seems to be using a hammer and nail where a thumb tack would do, the script from which Hitchcock shot the film reads as though it had been written by people wielding pickaxes and sledgehammers. Where in Chandler's script Guy's original reaction to Bruno's proposal is left vague, in the film he says: "Of course, I agree; I agree with *all* your theories." After talking to his estranged wife early in the story, he remarks, in Chandler's words: "I felt like breaking her cute little neck." In the film, this is changed to "I'd like to break her foul, useless little neck.... I said I could strangle her." There is then an immediate cut to Bruno's hands being manicured by his mother.

Hitchcock had no illusions about what he had created. "As I see it," he said, "the flaws of *Strangers on a Train* were the ineffectiveness of the two main actors and the weakness of the final script. If the dialogue had been better, we'd have had stronger characterizations. The great problem of this sort of picture, you see, is that your main characters sometimes tend to become mere figures."

Whether different behavior by Hitchcock or Chandler could have improved matters is impossible to know. Certainly the atmosphere in which they worked gave little opportunity for cordiality, and by mid-August their relationship began to deteriorate. One day, after lunching with Hitchcock in La Jolla, Chandler came down with food poisoning. He therefore told Stark that Warner Bros. should take him off salary, and as a result he received a letter from Finlay McDermid, the head of the story department, expressing "my own and the studio's deep appreciation of your integrity." The next day, Warner's legal department sent one of those needlessly grating notices which stated that "due to your physical incapacity preventing you from rendering services for us" and concluding that "we elect to exercise the right in said contract granted to us to suspend said contract as to the payment of compensation payable to you thereunder during the aforesaid period."

Chandler let this pass as a typical piece of Hollywood legalism, but



took the opportunity to write Stark about another matter that concerned him: "Hitchcock seems to be a very considerate and polite man, but he is full of little suggestions and ideas, which have a cramping effect on a writer's initiative. You are in a position of a fighter who can't get set because he is continuously being kept off balance by short jabs. I don't complain about this at all. Hitchcock is a rather special kind of director. He is always ready to sacrifice dramatic logic (insofar as it exists) for the sake of a camera effect or a mood effect. He is aware of this and accepts the handicap. He knows that in almost all his pictures there is some point where the story ceases to make any sense and becomes a chase, but he doesn't mind. This is very hard on a writer, especially on a writer who has any ideas of his own, because the writer not only has to make sense out of the foolish plot, if he can, but he has to do that and at the same time do it in such a way that any kind of camera shot or background shot that comes into Hitchcock's mind can be incorporated into it."

Because of these special circumstances, Chandler wanted Stark to arrange a lump sum payment for his work instead of a salary. In this way, the pressure would be reduced. He was also disturbed when he heard that his script was given to members of Hitchcock's staff for further work. "What this adds up to is that I have no assurance, to put it rather bluntly, that anything much more is happening to me than that my brain is being picked for whatever may be in it, and that someone else or a couple of someone elses are at work behind the scenes, casting the stuff into a screenplay form the way he wants it."

Stark was unable to change the contract, and Chandler continued on as before—only under greater pressure because he was suddenly told that the script had to be finished before the end of September so that Hitchcock could start shooting outdoor scenes in Washington before the leaves turned. On the evening of the twenty-sixth of September, Chandler sent off the final pages of the script. The next morning, Western Union telephoned to say that he had a telegram from Stark saying that Warner Bros. had taken him off salary. He thought this fast work, but when he received the actual telegram, he realized he had been suspended the day before, and that he had worked an extra day for nothing. Chandler became indignant and sent off letters to his agent and lawyer demanding to be paid for the extra day and also for the week for which he had voluntarily waived salary. He also wrote Finlay McDermid a letter in which he revealed some of his resentment toward Hitchcock: "Are you aware that this screenplay was written without one single consultation with Mr. Hitchcock after the writing of the

[final] screenplay began? Not even a phone call. Not one word of criticism or appreciation. Silence. Blank silence then and since. You are much too clever a man to believe that any writer will do his best in conditions like this. There are always things that need to be discussed. There are always places where a writer goes wrong, not being himself a master of the camera. There are always difficult little points which require the meeting of minds, the accommodation of points of view. I had none of this. I find it rather strange. I find it rather ruthless. I find it almost incomparably rude."

By now, Chandler was very angry, and when he learned that he had worked the extra day because Stark's office had failed to pass on Warner's message in time, he decided to get rid of Stark as his agent. He had earlier written that "the thing about agents that really annoys me is not that they make mistakes, but that they never admit them." He therefore concluded his letter to Stark's agency with these words: "*Some* explanation should have been made. There is no reason why I should put up with this sort of treatment, and no reason why I should have to deal with an agency which regards it as so much a matter of routine that it doesn't even have to be explained."

The affair had now blown up a considerable degree, with Chandler the main sufferer. Ray Stark told him that Warners had kept him on only at the agency's insistence, and this, while angering him further, also seemed to justify his earlier suspicions about Hitchcock. "Either he loathes the script or he is mad about something," he wrote. "Even in Hollywood, where a producer loves you to death until the end of the job and can't recognize you on the street the next day, this is carrying things pretty far."

He was further humiliated when he received the final script as rewritten by Czenzi Ormonde, with a request that he respond to the studio's proposal that screen credits be shared. Chandler naturally disliked the final script and even wrote a letter about it to Hitchcock, which he never sent. He had anticipated the question of attribution in a letter to his agency: "My dilemma," he said, "is that I ought to refuse credit in connection with such a poor job, but for professional reasons and for the record, and because I haven't had a screen credit for several years, I may have to take whatever credit I'm entitled to. A very sickening situation."

In the end, he agreed to one extra day's pay from Warner Bros. and settled for a shared credit. He explained away his troubles by attributing them to an initial error of judgment. "The fallacy of this operation," he wrote, "was my being involved in it at all, because it is obvious to me now, and must have been obvious to many people long since, that a Hitchcock picture has to be all Hitchcock. A script which shows any signs of a positive style must be obliterated or changed until it is quite innocuous, even if that means making it quite silly. What Hitchcock does with his camera, his actors and his stage business is quite all right. I haven't a thing against it. And I'm not going to suggest that he would do better if he had a little more sense of dramatic plausibility, because maybe he wouldn't do better. Maybe he'd do worse. Stark seemed to enjoy suggesting that my script was bad. But it wasn't bad. It was far better than what they finished with. It just had too much Chandler in it and not enough Hitchcock."

Apart from the obvious attempt at self-justification, this letter reveals the basic trouble with this collaboration. Chandler and Hitchcock were in many ways alike. Both believed in spontaneity and freshness, in characters and settings rather than in strictness of plot. As Chandler wanted to engender an emotional reaction through his writing, so Hitchcock was mainly after mood or feeling in his films. Yet working together was impossible, for their emotional intentions did not coincide. They began to criticize each other for the faults each suffered from separately. Chandler, who generally cared nothing for plots, worried about the narrative logic of his script. Hitchcock, with the same impulses, couldn't get Chandler to create plausible characters.

Chandler seems to have been the more volatile of the two, perhaps because he was always alone. Having complained about the need for story conferences with Hitchcock, he later objected to not having any. These veerings of temperament, generally expressed in a superficially calm and even lawyerly way in his correspondence, were natural in a writer who invested a great deal of feeling in whatever he did or said. They were the source of his strength as a novelist, allowing him to make imaginative leaps into the minds of his characters. But they were a nuisance when it came down to a cooperative venture like making a movie.

Predictably, Chandler had a low opinion of the finished film. "The picture has no guts, no plausibility, no characters, and no dialogue," he wrote after seeing it. "But, of course, it's Hitchcock, and a Hitchcock picture always does have something." The film's popularity embittered him. "I don't know why it's a success," he mused in a letter to Hamish Hamilton, "perhaps because Hitchcock succeeded in removing almost every trace of my writing from it." Clearly he was disappointed that his venture with Hitchcock had turned out so badly. He took it hard, for the film's success was a sign of a certain failure in himself, and he knew it. All he could do was pretend to ignore it and adopt a superior attitude.

After he stopped working on the Hitchcock film for Warner Bros., Chandler wrote to Brandt about his literary plans: "From now on I am going to write what I want to write as I want to write it. Some of it may flop. There are always going to be people who will say I have lost the pace I had once, that I take too long to say things now, and don't care enough about tight active plots. But I'm not writing for those people now. I'm writing for the people who understand about writing as an art and are more able to separate what a man does with words and ideas from what he thinks about Truman or the United Nations. (I have a low opinion of both.) If I feel like writing a fast tough story, I'll write it, but not because there is a market for it and because I've done it before. If I feel like writing a poetic or ironic fantasy, I'll write that. You have to get some fun out of this job, and you can't get it by filling orders."

This article has been adapted from a forthcoming biography, *The Life of Raymond Chandler*. Frank MacShane is head of the writing program at Columbia University.

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The Apprenticeship of

JOHN FORD

Through the youthful uncertainty there were glimpses of the master to come.

Charles Silver

Some of the cinema's foremost artists—Welles, Eisenstein, Truffaut—have displayed genius from the moment they stepped behind a camera. For others—Chaplin, Renoir, Griffith, Sternberg—it took only a short apprenticeship before inimitably brilliant personal visions could be discerned. John Ford, born John Martin Feeney, in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, on February 1, 1894, is very much an exception in that it took him two decades of practicing his craft to rise to a significant level of maturity as an artist, decades in which one might easily have dismissed Ford as destined to amount to nothing more than a half-ass cowboy and an ultimately forgettable film technician. Somehow, however, the brawling scion of an Irish saloonkeeper rose from the green valley of his youth to become one of the titans of twentieth-century art.

In his eloquent nineteenth-century plea for the emergence of a poetry of the people, Walt Whitman seemed eerily to anticipate the cinema and John Ford, its greatest American bard:

I feel with dejection and amazement that among our geniuses and talented writers or speakers, few or none have yet spoken to this people, created a single image-making work for them, or absorb'd the central spirit and the idiosyncrasies which are theirs—and which, thus, in highest ranges, so far remain entirely uncelebrated, unexpress'd....America demands a poetry that is bold, modern, and all-surrounding and cosmical, as she is herself.

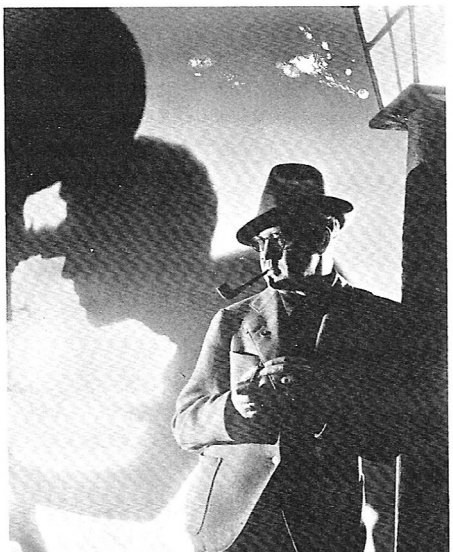
It is fitting, therefore, that in his catalog of those "rude and coarse nursing beds" from whence Whitman anticipated such an artist might come, he included "up in the Maine woods," where, less than two years after the good gray poet had gone to his reward, baby Jack Feeney began to nurse and to assimilate those experiences he was to fashion into his songs of American vistas.

A retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in the fall of 1975 was devoted almost entirely to Ford's first two decades as a filmmaker, the period of his apprenticeship and the time in his life when he was closest to his roots and to those of his Irish immigrant parents. Through the thick haze of youthful uncertainty, studio assignments, and the influence of such masters as D. W. Griffith and F. W. Murnau, one still sights Ford in every film, even if only for a sequence or two. It is that Ford one comes to love in *Young Mr. Lincoln*, *How Green Was My Valley*, *The Quiet Man*, and a dozen great Westerns. The values are less polished, but they are the same as Whitman's American values "of the manly and courageous instinct, and loving perceptions, and of self-respect."

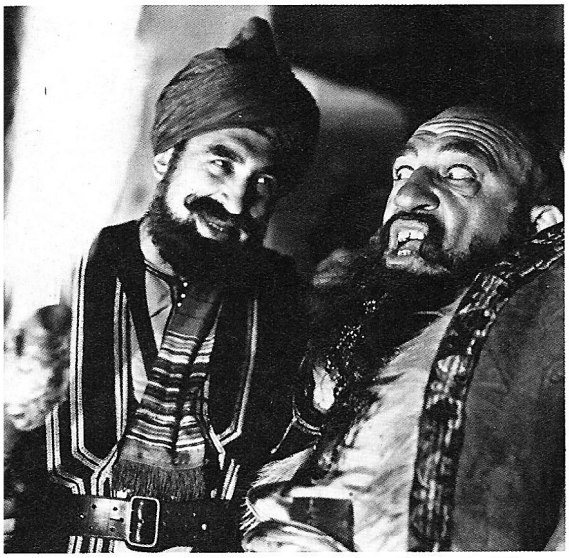
As early as *Straight Shooting* (1917), the oldest extant Ford film and his first feature, we have "Cheyenne Harry" Carey, the American frontier hero, living mostly out-of-doors, ineluctably sentimental, and not entirely comfortable with his need to be socially responsible and virtuous. Buck Jones in *Just Pals* (1920) is a decade younger than Carey, but he looks, walks, and acts like him. As with many Ford protagonists, romantic involvement is of secondary importance to him. Only the questioning of the young schoolmarm's honor arouses Jones from his lifetime lethargy and transforms the town bum, a rural Chaplin, into a chivalrous knight, equally Chaplinesque albeit equestrian.

Ford's American hero does not achieve complexity of character until, paradoxically, he becomes embodied by that least "sophisticated" of actors, Will Rogers. In the three films they collaborated on shortly before Rogers's tragic death in 1935—*Dr. Bull*, *Judge Priest*, and *Steam-*

John Ford on the set of The Informer *(1934); the film that confirmed Ford's reputation as one of America's leading directors.*



Alan Hale, John Gilbert in Cameo Kirby *(1923), an adaptation of a venerable Victorian stage melodrama.*



Mitchell Lewis, Walter Long in The Black Watch *(1929), beautifully photographed Arabian Nights nonsense.*

boat 'Round the Bend—the director synthesizes all that one could glean from his earlier films as being the Fordian sensibility. In so doing he also largely puts aside the formal expressionistic experiments of his post-*Sunrise* period, while paying the most touching of tributes to his friend and mentor D. W. Griffith. Much of this coming-of-age is facilitated by the great naturalness of Rogers as an actor. (One should contrast his performances with the histrionics of the Victor McLaglen films made at the same time—*The Lost Patrol* and *The Informer*.)

Will Rogers, like Henry Fonda and John Wayne in later years, enables Ford to get away with the most outrageous romanticism and sentiment. The device of the strong man conversing with the gravestone of his lost love, to be used so effectively in *Young Mr. Lincoln* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, appears first in *Judge Priest*. For Ford's characters the past is always as real as the present, and the continuity between the two provides the raison d'être and backbone of civilization. And for Ford in his maturity nothing is as epical and grandiose as a single, rather plain-spoken soul asserting what Whitman called "the pride and dignity of the common people, the lifeblood of democracy."

No cinematic form could possibly have lent itself better to Ford's purposes than the Western. It is most surprising, therefore, that so few of his films for Fox Film Corporation after his early Universal period (mostly collaborations with Harry Carey) were of this genre. It is incredible that he made none at all between *Three Bad Men* (1926) and *Stagecoach* (1939); surely Shakespeare would have made a few if he were at Fox during that period. Perhaps only after he found himself did Ford feel free to return to his first love, elevating and ennobling the form to the extent where he could proudly understate: "My name's John Ford. I make Westerns."

The surviving Westerns of these early years can only be disappointing if one looks for a silent *Rio Grande* or *The Searchers*. *Straight Shooting* isn't bad for 1917; *The Iron Horse* (1924) remains a classic of sorts; and *Three Bad Men* may even be (as has been asserted) the greatest Western of the silent era. Since we will probably never see many, if any, of the three dozen or so lost Westerns which Ford made before *The Iron Horse*, there is a necessary risk involved in generalizations based on those which survive. In all three the director seems more comfortable with outdoor and action sequences than with the demands of excessive melodrama apparently imposed by studio and audience expectations. (In fact, when *Just Pals* tends to get boringly bogged down by tedious plot complexities, Ford has everyone take to horse, providing himself with the opportunity for excitement and some lovely scenic shots.)

The director seems in total command of his visual tools as early as *Straight Shooting*, and numerous outdoor compositions are as carefully conceived as, even identical to, creations of the same eye several decades later. Ford once said, "The only thing I always had was an eye for composition." Thus, *The Iron Horse* frequently *looks* like *Wagon Master*, but the nonintuitive part of Ford hasn't really decided what he wants the images to say. There is only one level of meaning, and when he isn't being picturesque, when he is obligated to show actors mouthing intertitles, the director's attention does not seem fully engaged. Judged by the dramatic standards of *The Gold Rush*, *The Marriage Circle*, *Isn't Life Wonderful?*, *The Navigator*, or *The Big Parade*, Ford (save for his evident craftsmanship) might have been dismissed in the mid-twenties as a very minor director indeed.

Ford's films in the decade following *The Iron Horse*, the success of which established what reputation he had, betray something less than total confidence that his own instinctual visual sense was enough. In beginning to think of himself as an artist (he was now thirty), he perhaps felt a need to do something other than what came naturally to him. By 1925 foreign films were being imported with some regularity, and German silent films like *The Last Laugh* and *Siegfried* could not go unnoticed by American filmmakers. *Kentucky Pride* (1925), essentially a conventional movie except for its narrator being a horse, begins with the use of distorting lenses to convey the first unfocused vision of the newly born filly. In *The Shamrock Handicap* (1926) George Schneiderman photographs the Irish sequences through a misty gauze, and Ford uses a dulling of focus and slow motion when a comic black character falls under the influence of ether and gets spooked by surgeons in white robes and masks. Lou Tellegen's sinister persona and his death scene in *Three Bad Men* seem to have been influenced by either his or Ford's having seen *Nosferatu*.

The physical presence of F. W. Murnau on the Fox lot and the masterful achievement of *Sunrise* thus furthered a tendency in Ford which was already in evidence. *Four Sons* (1928) was shot on some of the same sets as *Sunrise*, and the young Irish director showed himself fully as capable of devising extraordinary tracking shots through this caricatured Bavaria as any German might be. There is an extraordinary sequence in which the camera moves with the Americanized son as he traverses a misty battlefield to discover that the dying "Kraut" crying out for his "Mütterchen" is his own brother. The mise-en-scène closely resembles George O'Brien's secret

meeting in the marsh with the "woman from the city" in *Sunrise*. *Four Sons* abounds with shadows and even mystical superimpositions, but they don't always compensate for its sickly sweet sentimentality and artsy self-consciousness.

Ford pursued the same imitative course in *Hangman's House* (1928) and *The Black Watch* (1929), occasionally achieving striking effects, but often at the cost of concealing what we have come to think of as Ford's personal genius. *Hangman's House* is as polished and assured a piece of silent Hollywood expressionism as there is this side of Murnau, but it essentially lacks Ford's warm humanity and humor. The director's inborn sense of the picturesqueness of nature is replaced in this period by a fondness for UFA-like studio-built artifice.

With the dramatic awfulness of the fantasy India of *The Black Watch* (much of the worst of it was apparently directed by stage import Lumsden Hare), one is grateful for the resplendently photographed and lighted Arabian Nights nonsense Ford and Joe August capture, even if we do see the klieg lights reflected in Myrna Loy's crystal ball. Although it is a crystal ball equipped with a capacity for fabulous tracking shots and lap dissolves, Ford manages to provide the sequence (and one or two others) with sufficient aural experimentation to make this, his first sound feature, not quite a disaster.

Peter Bogdanovich has suggested that the films of Ford's lost Universal period (1917-1921), of which only *Straight Shooting* is currently available, were probably more interesting than those he later made at Fox. What Universal lacked in funds (the *interiors* of *Straight Shooting* are shot in sunlight and a strong wind), it made up for in the autonomy it offered the director. One recalls Ford's story of Universal Studio head Carl Laemmle's recommendation of him and assessment of his talents: "Give Jack Ford the job—he yells good."

At Fox, however, Ford was considered more a resident craftsman than an artist. When *Born Reckless* (1930) floundered, he was called in to salvage as much of it as possible. One hesitates to blame Ford for the awkwardness of this sentimental gangster tale, and one doubts that he was at all comfortable with its amorality. Its most representative performance is by Ilka Chase who justifiably goes through her scene looking as if she smells something bad.

Vera Allen, Will Rogers in Dr. Bull *(1934). Wry, laconic Rogers was the embodiment of James Gould Cozzens's country doctor.*

On his next film, *Up the River* (1930), Ford was saddled with a script that was "just a bunch of junk." Yet by improvising some tolerable comedy sequences, and abetted by the charmingly youthful Spencer Tracy and Humphrey Bogart, the director manages to transcend the "junk." Although other prison films of the period, notably Josef von Sternberg's *Thunderbolt* and George Hill's *The Big House*, are decidedly better, *Up the River* at times seems perversely personal. The inmates' ensemble rendition of "Stand Tried and True" rivals the songs (two decades later) of the U.S. Cavalry in loyalty to their institution. When a tenor entertains with the most sentimental of musical salutes to his mother, Ford transforms this potentially maudlin moment into something approximating poetry by tracking past a line of lonely faces.

Fordian humor, which had often been clumsily handled in earlier films, hits its stride with the team of Spencer Tracy and Warren Hymer, the latter appearing in one scene (with cigar) in drag. And although no one could have been aware of it at the time, there is perverse irony in Bogart's "Joe College" role in light of his later career—not that one doesn't occasionally sense nervous hints even here of Roy Earle or Charlie Allnut.

Seas Beneath (1931) is probably the most striking example of the schism in Ford's Fox psyche. As with the silent Westerns, the action sequences of this World War I adventure have a beauty and conviction which is dissipated by the melodramatic histrionics of the rest. Ford took great care in the composition and lighting of the exteriors. As in all his best work, the director provides images in depth by using several planes of light within a given frame, in this case making effective use of masts and rigging. The several sequences involving the maneuvering and sinking of ships and submarines are exquisitely shot by Joe August with the use of long takes to provide verisimilitude—no miniatures or sneaky montages to create illusions. The Germans actually speak German (there are a few intertitles for translation), and they are treated as warm human beings—they have mothers.

Unfortunately, Ford was forced to

use Marion Lessing as the female lead, and her love scenes with George O'Brien are hysterically inept and sappy. In tight pants and the state of seminudity which became his trademark, O'Brien isn't all that bad as the virile hero. (This was the last collaboration between Ford and O'Brien until the latter resurfaced in 1948 as a father figure in *Fort Apache*.) One can also not resist a kind word for Mona Maris as a Canary Islands canary named Lolita, a dime-store Dietrich probably inspired by Lola-Lola.

A measure of the rapidity and casualness with which these Fox films were turned out comes in the opening expressionistic sequence of *The Brat* (1931), the only section of the film which attempts anything visually ambitious. As a police van races excitedly past the bright lights of New York, one can hardly help but notice from the marquee letters that the back projection is reversed. After a brief flourish of angle shots and camera movements, Ford seems content to record this stage play on film, allowing Sally O'Neil and Alan Dinehart to display their emotive charm. Only a glimpse of Ward Bond as a cop or the Irish intrusion of J. Farrell MacDonald (affectionately dubbed "Curley") as the butler reminds one that John Ford was somewhere around when the film was made.

It is not surprising that, although Ford maintained his Fox base, he allowed himself to be loaned out to five other studios in the next three years. Unfortunately, he didn't always capitalize on these opportunities, and his final "coming out" eventually occurred back at Fox. *Arrowsmith* (1931), made for Samuel Goldwyn, bears the burdens of F. W. Murnau and Helen Hayes. *Flesh* (1932) looks like it might have been made by any MGM director of minimal talent and the almost requisite nonpersonality. It is very static and slow; the lack of imaginative angles, lighting, and the long takes suggest uninterest on the part of Ford. Karen Morley and Ricardo Cortez are histrionic, and Wallace Beery chews up several beer gardens and wrestling rings in his unchecked bid to be Emil Jannings. RKO's *The Lost Patrol* (1934) suffers from too much Dudley Nichols, Max Steiner, and Boris Karloff; again too little John Ford.

Eugene O'Neill once said: "One thing that explains more than anything about me is the fact that I'm Irish." In spite of all the elements working against personal expression during the years of Ford's apprenticeship, the one aspect of his personality about which he was most direct was his Irishness. *The Iron Horse* and *Kentucky Pride* both contrast sympathetic, though funny, Irishmen with untrustworthy Italians. By *The Shamrock Handicap* (1926) Ford offered his first nostalgic portrait of "Old Erin," many of the landscapes and compositions clearly portending his masterpiece of Irishry, *The Quiet Man* (1952). There must surely be more than a touch of Feeney family sadness in the comments about leaving the old sod for America.

Hangman's House (1928) contains the title: "Ireland—Such a little place to be so greatly loved." In the final sequence, which so closely resembles the end of *The Searchers*, McLaglen must return to the Foreign Legion, forlornly aware that Ireland and the true love of a colleen like June Collyer are beyond his reach. He tells her, "I'm going back to the brown desert...but I'm taking the green place with me in my heart."

In *Riley the Cop* (1928), a lovely little Chaplinesque film (even to the point of borrowing a joke from *Easy Street*), Riley (J. Farrell MacDonald) doesn't ever get to Ireland, but he explicitly mourns the fact that he is sent to Germany instead. In this good-natured policeman who measures his success by never having made an arrest, I would suggest we have as close to a self-portrait as young Ford ever came. Flirtatious, generous, and a little bit silly, MacDonald fulfills much the same function Renoir does in *Rules of the Game*, acting in effect as the on-screen director of the action, a more-or-less mature *metteur-en-scène*. Unlike Renoir, however, he winds up married at the end, although one might argue that Louise Fazenda is a dubious reward.

The Informer, of course, displays Ford's Irishness literally and figuratively with a vengeance. This by-now controversial film usually separates the two major camps regarding Ford. Although the film has its moments, I certainly do not adhere to the traditional view that this is perhaps Ford's high-water mark.

The film's heavy-handed Dudley Nichols dramaturgy and RKO expressionism, combined with Ford's essential lack of sympathy for his protagonist, ultimately prove stifling. Someone once wrote of James O'Neill (Eugene's actor-father): "He's an Irishman, which is only another way of saying that he has a deep capacity for sympathy." Ford's Irishness has never been called into question, and he shows some compassion for Gypo Nolan, but his heart in this case belonged to the Irish Republican Army. Most of the excesses and absurdities of the film, like the symbolic last scene in the church, are taken directly from Liam O'Flaherty's novel. The most touching moment, when Katie tells a pathetic Gypo "I'll love you when I'm clay," is not in the book and is, one suspects, pure Ford.

John Martin Feeney made only a few more films in the succeeding thirty years bearing directly on Ireland, but there can be slight doubt that, like Citizen Hogan in *Hangman's House*, part of the green place was always in his heart.

It has become a commonplace to say that all filmmakers owe their greatest debt to D. W. Griffith. The unprecedented opportunity (in this year of his centennial) of surveying his entire career, combined with a study of Ford's early work, makes it clear that no one owed Griffith more, or was more forthcoming in payment, than John Ford. "Griffith made it something worthwhile," Ford said. "As he got older, we became more friendly." An essay in itself could be written on the Griffith influence on *Straight Shooting*: the use of stylistic tools like the iris, the Mae Marsh-like appearance and performance of Molly Malone, the great similarity in composition and editing between the climactic warning of the farmers and the ride of the Klan in *The Birth of a Nation*. (Ford had donned a sheet for that sequence, and he borrows from it again in *Cameo Kirby* and *Three Bad Men*, the latter even featuring a burning cross.)

Just Pals comes hard on the heels

of Griffith's affecting evocations of rural America, *True Heart Susie*, *A Romance of Happy Valley*, and *The Greatest Question*. The Ford film exhibits some of the same brilliance at being simultaneously naturalistic and poetic, often eliciting very sophisticated emotional responses with the simplest of visual means. Somehow these two men share an ineffable genius for baring their souls and moving us by the way they photograph a tree or shade a landscape.

In *Cameo Kirby*, a Victorian melodrama of the sort Griffith grew up with on the stage, Ford's portrayal of the South and slavery is not far removed from *The Birth*. The director seems to have little interest in the insipidly romantic plot, reserving attention for scenes involving horses and steamboats. *The Iron Horse* and *Three Bad Men* follow very much in the Griffith epic tradition, documenting their "accuracy" with quotations and reconstructions of actual historic scenes. And even as late as *Four Sons*, the departure of the German soldiers for the front has much of the same quality as the comparable sequence in *The Birth*.

Griffith made his last film, *The Struggle*, in 1931, but he spent much of the seventeen years before his death in Hollywood. If one didn't know better, one might try to build a case for him (not unlike the case for Christopher Marlowe vis-a-vis Shakespeare) as the true author of many of Ford's films of that period. Surely they are like the films Griffith might have made if his career had not come to an abrupt and unwarranted end.

Ford's *Pilgrimage* (1933), for example, is so sentimental in its treatment of motherhood that one believes only Griffith could have breathed into the movie the conviction it lacks. There are Griffithian moments, however, when that almost seems to have happened, as when Henrietta Grossman leaves to visit her son's grave in France and her estranged daughter-in-law gives her a bouquet of flowers through the train window; we see only the two sets of hands. A more Fordian scene occurs when the mother tries to restore the photo of her dead son she had torn in rage, literally piecing together her memories.

Dr. Bull (1933), the first and perhaps the slightest of the three Will Rogers films, lends a Griffith-like richness and beauty to its portrayal of a New England town. Ford is able to derive humor from both birth and death, and the film manages to be gloriously romantic and politically cogent, there being no accident that pompous Burton Churchill looks so much like Herbert Hoover.

Judge Priest (1934) is, among other things, Ford's salute to *The Birth of a Nation*; he uses Henry B. Walthall to provide the most stirring climax of any Ford film to that date. Walthall is once again the "Little Colonel" telling a jury via a split-screen of an heroic deed in the "War for the Southern Confederacy." (Ford had used a similar device a decade earlier in *Lightnin'*, having ancient veteran Jay Hunt describe the military funeral he anticipates while it is shown on the other side of the screen.) "The implication that Walthall's role," Emily Sieger suggests, "is the same character twenty-five years after the war imbues the scene with an emotional resonance that goes beyond the words he speaks." The film ends with a grand parade recalling the one in *The Birth*. The combined talents of Rogers, Stepin Fetchit, Francis Ford, and Hattie McDaniel make *Judge Priest* one of the funniest Hollywood films of the thirties.

Steamboat 'Round the Bend does for *Intolerance* what *Judge Priest* did for *The Birth*, climaxing on the scaffold with a last minute rescue. Although most of the film's humor was apparently excised against Ford's will, the two reels of steamboat racing contain some of the purest farce in American cinema. It is fitting, too, that Will Rogers's last film should be, in part, a homage to Mark Twain, whose place he had taken in the hearts of many of his countrymen.

For John Ford *Steamboat* marks a turning point, for it has a fullness and diversity his earlier films lacked. He had grown out of the two classic movements of the silent cinema—he had learned from Griffith and Murnau—and now he was to weave these two together into a classicism and genius of his own. Not only had he grown out, but he had grown up. ★

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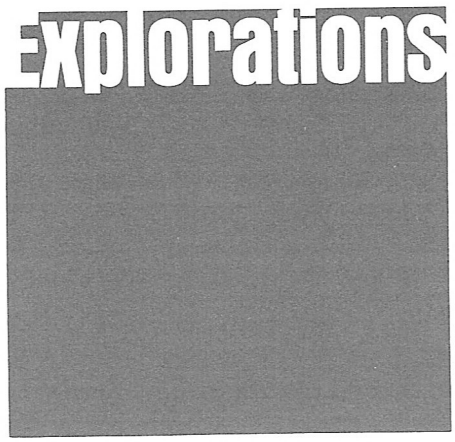
Edith Chapman, Jay Hunt, Otis Harlan in Lightnin' *(1925), a knockabout version of Frank Bacon's popular stage comedy.*

Lincoln Center and the Real Thing

Bruce Cook



At Lincoln Center that night there was the kind of nervous excitement in the air that one associates with opening nights at theaters several blocks farther down Broadway. It may have been one of the New York Philharmonic's regularly scheduled concerts with Andre Previn guest conducting for the umpteenth time and with Van Cliburn adding one more to the thirty-odd solo appearances he has already made with the orchestra. Nevertheless, it was an occasion—and a premiere of a different sort.

This was to be the first in a new series of TV broadcasts on New York's WNET and other Public Broadcasting System stations. "Live from Lincoln Center" marked the end of three years of planning and preparation for the event. It was also the beginning of an ambitious broadcasting program developed and handled completely by Lincoln Center, of which this PBS series was just the first installment. Advances in TV technology had made it possible, and probably inevitable, that such "event" broadcasts in the arts under unaltered, routine concert and stage conditions, would one day take place. In reporting on the upcoming broadcasts, *The New York Times*' TV reporter Les Brown assured his readers that "it is possible to televise Isaac Stern and the New York Philharmonic in a performance of a Beethoven violin concerto or Grace Bumbry in a Metropolitan Opera appearance as intimately and dramatically from the stage as to cover Joe Namath and the New York Jets from the field at Shea Stadium."

What could not be readily foreseen, however, is the extent to which the Lincoln Center people have run their own show. It is the first time that an American arts institution has chosen to dirty its hands in the sometimes messy business of broadcasting. Amyas Ames, chairman of the board of Lincoln Center, and John W. Mazzola, managing director, said in effect, "Look, this is a Lincoln Center project. We will take charge of it because we know best what our responsibilities and limitations in it should be." And take charge they did through Lincoln Center's Media Development Department, which was established specifically for this purpose, and with the help of the usual cornucopia of grants from government, business, and private foundations. As John Goberman, the director of that office, explains it: "From the beginning, the understanding was that this was really going to be an arts development because we would put performance first. Television puts television first."

And television was a little nervous that night at Lincoln Center. On the way up to view the broadcast in the Helen Hull Room, which is tucked away in the upper recesses of Avery Fisher Hall, two men at the elevator exchanged pleasantries:

"Well," said the first, "tonight's the big night."

The second, who was John Jay Iselin, president of WNET, offered a tentative smile. "That remains to be seen," he said.

Although probably every member of the audience knew by the time he took his seat in the auditorium that this New York Philharmonic concert was to be televised nationally, it would have been difficult to detect any evidence of it. Had he approached from 65th Street, the concertgoer might have noticed a huge tractor-trailer truck parked at the stage entrance with heavy-duty electrical wiring leading into the building. (This was the control room from which Kirk Browning would direct the entire show.) And inside the hall, he might note with surprise that there were no extra lights on the concert stage—no extra lights anywhere. The entire program was to be done under normal concert lighting. Nor at first would he be likely to spot the TV cameras, for they were relatively small Fernseh models which were placed unobtrusively (in one case actually hidden) around the hall, most at some distance from the stage. The concertgoer might finally have been a little disappointed, for if what he was seeing and hearing in Avery Fisher Hall was going out across the country, there was little indication of it, as far as he could tell. This was just like the last Philharmonic concert he had gone to. And that, of course, is just what Lincoln Center intended.

But what about the TV viewer at home? What would he have seen? He would have seen a two-hour program that emphasized from first moment to last the existential quality of its live presentation. Opening with atmospheric sweep shots of Broadway and the entrance to Avery Fisher Hall at the north side of the Lincoln Center complex ("We felt we had to establish the live quality of the presentation, so that's why we paid a lot to have a camera out on the plaza for one minute of airtime," John Goberman said later.), the program then brought us immediately inside and backstage for a brief introduction by Carlos Moseley, president of the New York Philharmonic Society—no Deems Taylor he! Moseley may have fumbled and bumbled a bit, but he knows his orchestra, takes enormous pride in it, and his knowledge and pride showed through clearly in his opening remarks and later during his intermission interview with Andre Previn. His artless sincerity was welcome; it worked well to keep the occasion less formal and more accessible to the viewing audience.

The musical program that night must have been chosen with an eye toward the great potential audience out there before their TV sets. It could hardly have been more accessible: Hector Berlioz's overture to his opera, *Beatrice and Benedict*; Van Cliburn as the soloist on the Grieg Piano Concerto in A Minor; and Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*. Nevertheless, it was musically quite a respectable program, and the performances of conductor, orchestra, and soloist were, to my inexpert ears at least, quite beyond reproach.

As for the visual presentation of the program, it featured long, slow, sweeping pans of the various sections of the orchestra from separate angles which were well coordinated with the score. The zoom capability of the Fernseh cameras with their eighteen-to-one lenses made it possible for an all-encompassing long shot from the balcony to narrow down ever so slowly to detail the fingers of Van Cliburn on the keyboard as he coaxed forth the last, delicate ping in a pianissimo passage. There were reverse angle shots from two cameras situated behind the orchestra that were used chiefly to capture

Andre Previn (left) and Van Cliburn (right) as they appeared on TV monitors in mobile van control center.

conductor Andre Previn in close shots. Unavoidably—shooting at the concert stage and out from it—there were extreme contrasts in lighting, contrasts that were suddenly disturbing in cuts. Previn got the best of that by far: Highlighted from above, with darkness behind, he appeared (as he should have) to be not just the star of the show, but, with his expressive face and theatrical presence, the leading actor in this musical drama.

All this was observed in the comfort of the Helen Hull Room, where journalists and TV people had gathered to watch the proceedings on TV sets supplied by Lincoln Center and to listen on the stereo simulcast on WQXR-FM. (Sad but true: Commercially manufactured TV sets simply do not offer speakers of a size and quality to do justice to such a musical broadcast.) In the course of the program small groups of those present in the Helen Hull Room were ushered to a vantage point overlooking the hall where the all but invisible cameras were pointed out and the technical details of the Lincoln Center setup explained.

After some persistent petitioning, I was also taken down to 65th Street and Lincoln Center's control-room-in-a-truck. It bore the inscription, Continental Colour Recording, Inc., and, in fact, though this was a live broadcast, a videotape of the program was being recorded as it was transmitted. This was solely as a record for Lincoln Center, I was told; there are no plans to rebroadcast.

Inside, there was that tense atmosphere of controlled chaos which swept me back instantly to the heyday of live television. Director Kirk Browning, a tall, silver-haired man, was in the catbird seat. "Number four, go to a two-shot," he was saying into his headset.

The score reader at his side alerted him to the next musical cue, readying Browning with a countdown: "Four-three-two-one."

He called for the new shot on one of the thirteen monitors before him with a snap of his fingers. "Okay, three," he said, "on Previn. Shot number sixty-eight is coming up now."

And so it went. Behind Browning, not as busy but looking just as nervous, was John Goberman, Lincoln Center's director of Media Development and the producer of "Live from Lincoln Center." When I talked to him later—I wouldn't have dared to approach him then—he called my attention to Browning's strict adherence to the musical values of the program, saying, "Essentially, the director last night was Richard Strauss."

Goberman has a strong background in music himself. Until a few years ago, he was a professional cellist who made his living playing chamber music and working in opera, ballet, and recording orchestras around the city. He was working in the orchestra of the New York City Opera when he let it out that he was interested in becoming involved in the business side of music and was offered a job as administrative coordinator. Beginning as a sort of factotum, he soon found his way into television when, under his guidance, the company offered a successful production of Rimski-Korsakov's *Le Coq d'Or* in November 1971 over cable television. Lincoln Center immediately became interested in the possibility of using such performance broadcasts over pay and public television in order to help solve the financial problems of its member companies. Amyas Ames and John Mazzola began conversations with Goberman regarding the possibilities of such a plan. And in 1972, they created the Center's Media Development Department and installed him as director.

Considering that he had been working for over three years putting together this first "Live from Lincoln Center" broadcast, he had a right to look relieved when I talked with him in his office the next day. I began by congratulating him on the show. He said that although there had been a few slipups, there were no disasters, and that in general he was pleased with their debut.

"What was most important in my view," Goberman said, "is that we proved it could be done *live*. Transmission of the live moment is the magic of television. Somebody can sit in his living room and get awfully confused about what's real and what's fake. You go from pictures of a plane crash on the news to a war movie, and it all looks pretty much the same. This is why we felt it was important to present not what purported to be a live broadcast—live-on-tape or something—but the broadcast itself. This is performance television, *event* television, where the audience is a very important factor in the entire presentation. I don't think a TV camera can ever take the place of an audience. Without a performer and an audience, you haven't really got anything."

"That means you don't really think the performing arts have been getting the proper presentation on television," I suggested.

"I think the real problem is that the performing arts have allowed television to take over and run them. In presenting what we did last night there was a judgment involved, a kind of trade-off between what we knew was the very best we could get on the screen, and what that best would have done to the performance. We gave up something. We know that. We could have had much better shots if we had handed it over to television and let them do it in the conventional way. That would have been five days of shooting under special hot lights. In effect, the concert stage would have been turned into a studio.

"So we made basic decisions all along the line," Goberman continued. "For instance, *Ein Heldenleben* has 110 musicians onstage at one time. We needed the camera for the conductor, but the stage would have been jammed if we had tried to set it up right there in the middle of everybody. We didn't want to put it onstage at all, so we had a port cut into the wall of the stage. That took care of everything. Look, the point I'm making is that we put performance first. That was our

guiding principle through the whole business."

"And I guess it's safe to assume it will continue to be?"

"Absolutely. And you want to keep in mind that we will be presenting a whole spectrum of events in our 'Live from Lincoln Center' series—opera, ballet, plays, and chamber music—not just the Philharmonic. But the principle will be the same. After all, the opera experience is a singer in a room with people. When you start making it all perfect, you destroy the performance aspect.

"Just imagine what we've got to offer here. There are 3,000 performances a year of 250 different productions at Lincoln Center. Public television and pay television are both in our long-range planning here. We're looking at pay television very seriously because we are seeking out new sources of revenue. What last night did was to establish the product. They know we can deliver now, and they have some idea of what we have to offer."

I asked if that meant Lincoln Center would be withdrawing from public television after this initial season, and Goberman gave me an emphatic negative. "No, we must always have a presence on public television, for it provides an exposure factor we need. There's no limit, after all. Why, last night we were on public television, and Wednesday night we could be on pay television with Georg Solti conducting Beethoven's Ninth. And then a ballet or a play. There's just such an enormous variety and volume here that there's no stopping us."

He is just as optimistic as he sounds. If there was ever a man who believed in the high quality of the product he is selling, that man is John Goberman. His visionary's faith in Lincoln Center's mission on television is such that he even had gotten up the morning after the premiere of "Live from Lincoln Center" and had neglected to read the reviews. He asked if I had seen them. I said they had been good. He nodded, pleased, but only because his judgment had been vindicated.

By the time I talked to Kirk Browning, however, other reviews had appeared that were more critical of "Live from Lincoln Center." One by a *New Yorker* writer named Wallace White, which appeared in the Sunday *New York Times* Arts and Leisure section, seems to have carried some weight. Although disapproving, it was rather unfocused. What White seems to have objected to most of all was the visual style of presentation—the long, slow sweep of the pans and tilts merging one into the next. "More frequent cuts...," he remarks, "would not necessarily have been distracting to this viewer." The impression White creates is that the presentation lacked energy.

Kirk Browning wanted to talk about that. "I think you learn from negative criticisms if they're sincere, so I'm not sorry to see some adverse reaction. One writer said the camera work was 'aimless.' Well, the technique we developed for this must be handled with precision or it does look aimless. And if any of it did, then that was too much. As for more frequent cuts, the simplest thing in the world would be to use tight cameras and a lot of cutting. We chose not to. I'm convinced this is the right technique for the presentation of an orchestral program. It's just that we've got to improve and refine what we're doing a bit."

Browning has the knowledge and background to make such a decision on treatment and stick by it. No director in New York, probably none in the country, has more experience than he has in the visual presentation of music. He began as a staff director at NBC in 1949. In fact, one of his first assignments as a director was to do live TV broadcasts of Toscanini's final five concerts with the NBC Symphony. As it happened, Browning was thrown into the breach when a sports director with his first shot at the symphony had called down the maestro's wrath upon himself. The sports director had taken his cue from the title of a number of the program, so when Toscanini had taken the orchestra just a few bars into Debussy's "Girl With the Flaxen Hair," he superimposed a beautiful, blonde model posed picturesquely beside a pond. The moment he heard what had been done, Toscanini had him fired from the show. Kirk Browning came on with instructions to keep every camera on Toscanini and on nothing else. That may not be the way to present a symphony orchestra on television but that is how it was handled in the beginning. Through the years—at NBC until 1960 and then as a free-lancer—Browning has developed his own methods for handling musical events.

"It's almost the same problem with ballet," Browning continues. "The happy thing about a symphony orchestra is that it doesn't move, so that the camera movement doesn't have to compete with any other. Dancers, however, have a habit of moving. And in presenting ballet, you've got this problem of how you present movement on the stage. I've decided you must give up something when you do ballet on the stage, because I think it is

Obtrusive cameras and hot lights were missing from the first live TV broadcast from Lincoln Center.

absolutely essential to get close enough to show the dancers as individual performers, as human beings—and not just as moving forms. Well, this is a tricky business and some do not agree with me in this—George Balanchine, for one.

"Opera, again, is not so different. There you are basically focusing on people, on the individual singers. There is not the same sort of problem of movement as there is with ballet. It comes to depend on how good the performers are in emphasizing the nuances of their own rules, basically how good they are as actors."

"What about actors?" I put in. "What sort of difficulties will there be in doing plays from the Vivian Beaumont Theater for the series?"

"That may be almost the biggest problem of all—although you would think it should be the easiest. The audience is so critical in this area because they see every dramatic presentation on television as a TV play. They lose sight of the fact that basically they are in a theater, and it seems quite primitive to them. You know, we did tapes of all the things we plan to do in the first season of this PBS series. And in many ways the play we did from the Beaumont was almost the least successful—*A Doll's House*."

"Could it be that it was too much in the realistic mode?" I asked. "Perhaps it was more obviously a theater piece?"

"I think you may be right. Something like Shakespeare or Molière might really have worked better. The way it was with a piece of verismo like *A Doll's House*, when the auditorium went silent, you immediately lost your frame of reference. You were no longer in a theater. Only when you lost that, your expectations were not quite satisfied on camera movement, cutting, and so on. Some plays certainly are not right for this style of live presentation. Certain symphony material is also not right, and certain ballets. It's true. You do have to be selective in certain ways, just as you have to be precise in working out your techniques.

"But there are refinements. Because it's all going to happen, I'm convinced of it. And I'm also convinced that basically the approach we use is right."

It remained only for the TV people to speak their piece. Having been offered Lincoln Center carte blanche, so to speak, WNET had a vested interest in the results of what must have seemed a risky experiment to them. In one sense, at least, "Live from Lincoln Center" had to be counted a great success, for the participation of stations in the Public Broadcasting System network, to which it was made available, was very near total. Over eighty percent of 203 stations had carried the program, including two—KQED in San Francisco and KCET in Los Angeles—which received transmission by satellite from the Gulf-Western Building. John Jay Iselin, president of WNET, had voiced mild skepticism before the broadcast. Was he pleased with what he had seen?

"It was very definitely a success from our point of view, and a success in just about every way I can imagine—artistically and institutionally, you name it. It came as the result of some fairly delicate arrangements between two institutions that had never worked together before, after all. And it's not like a couple of big monolithic corporations making a deal, either. Because what you've got is educational television, a loose-knit consortium of many different stations, combining with Lincoln Center, a loose-knit consortium of arts companies, to bring off an entertainment event, an ongoing series.

"Now, from our side, the most important component of this success is the promise that cultural events which heretofore have been the province of the few will now be available to the many. Live broadcast becomes a procedure, a technique for accomplishing this mission. It gives anyone with a TV set the opportunity to eavesdrop on and participate in the cultural life of music and drama here in New York without having the wealth or clout it takes to have a season ticket at Lincoln Center. Channel 13 in this way becomes the cultural broker between important cultural events and those outside who are profoundly interested in them."

Satellite terminal outside Lincoln Center will bring the performing arts to the vast TV audience.

It is easy to become inured to such high-sounding statements, no matter how true, and skeptical of such undertakings as "Live from Lincoln Center," no matter how ambitious. We have been told so often that truth, or beauty, or art will set us free that we begin to wonder how it happens we are still trussed up just as before. Nevertheless, the broadcast possibilities offered by that resplendent palace of culture on New York's West Side do indeed seem exceptional. And Lincoln Center is thinking big. No doubt about it. On my way out of John Goberman's office, he called my attention to a photograph on his wall, a large apparatus that looked like it belonged in a radar installation. "See that? You know what that is?" I told him I didn't. "It's a satellite-sending terminal. That's what I want to have here, right on top of Lincoln Center. Then we can send out to anyplace. There'll be no limits then." Tomorrow the world.

Bruce Cook is a contributing editor to *American Film*.

Focus on Education

Charles Silver

How do you respond politely to a college film student who wants to see *The Clarinet of Dr. Caligari* or *Nanook of the South*? How does one reconcile the interests of the scholar who feels he must spend months running a minute of Vertov through a viewer with those of the writer who thinks any viable conception of film history must await the screening of lost Rin-Tin-Tin epics at the Theodore Huff Memorial Society? By the time this reaches print I will have spent nearly six years supervising the Film Study Center of the Museum of Modern Art. Although I do not have to deal with these problems every day, they are, in their somewhat exaggerated way, not untypical.

The Museum had always tried to make its films and collateral documentation available to researchers since the inception of the Film Library in 1935, but it was not until 1968 that a formal Study Center was founded. By that time the Department of Film (as the film library is now called) had achieved an unparalleled reputation in the areas of film circulation, preservation, and exhibition. Through the initiative of Director Willard Van Dyke and the labor of my predecessors—Gary Carey, Melinda Ward, and Regina Cornwell—the small but very active research facility was already well established when I took it over in October 1970. Then, as now, we suffered from ambition in excess of our very limited space, equipment, and staff.

Viewing Facilities

We have presently in operation one 16mm Steenbeck reader and one 16mm projection room for visiting scholars. Because the demand for viewing films from the collection is very heavy and, at best, there are only about seventy hours a week in which to view them, we have had to place fairly rigid restrictions on the use of these machines. Each request must be made in writing by either a supervising professor, magazine editor, or book publisher specifying the research project, attesting to its validity, and indicating the requisite films. Although waiting time is largely a function of supply and demand, at least a week's advance notice is advisable. The Museum reserves the right to turn down requests based on the relative merit of a project in the context of the needs of others. Those who require extensive screenings of large numbers of films or who need to do a detailed study of a particular film in an especially busy season are advised to go elsewhere—the Library of Congress Motion Picture Section, George Eastman House, the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research.

The Museum's films at present are stored in a commercial vault in New Jersey. In order to have a film properly inspected for use we must pay a fee which is passed on to the user. For 16mm prints this is computed on the basis of sixty-five cents per four hundred feet. Thus a feature film of eight reels (approximately eighty-five minutes) would cost $5.20. Through recent grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts, we are now in a position to create a core film study collection which will be housed on the premises of the Museum in close proximity to the Study Center. In addition, many 16mm archival prints will also be brought in from the vault for storage here. By 1977, this will negate the necessity for charging inspection fees in a great many instances. Before that time we also should have in operation an additional Steenbeck and an analyst projector.

Virtually all of the several thousand films in the Museum's archives are available for study. Although there is presently no published catalog of our holdings, the Museum's catalog of circulating films is a small but representative sampling of what is available. Where no 16mm copy exists, a student may rent the services of the staff projectionist at the rate of ten dollars an hour for private viewing of 35mm prints. Since this projection room is also in heavy demand for staff and other needs, even more stringent limitations apply to the use of this facility by scholars. One of the vital by-products, however, of the Museum's preservation program in recent years has been the striking of 16mm copies essentially for study purposes.

Documentation

It is necessary to state at the outset of this section that all materials are available to bona fide scholars *by appointment only*. (Call Emily Sieger or Charles Silver at area code 212-956-4212.) Although the press of other duties makes our official hours of access one to five, Monday through Friday, morning hours are available to visitors from out-of-town or those unable to come in the afternoons. (The Library and Museum for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center offers somewhat similar facilities to scholars and the general public six days a week and some evenings.)

We have a collection of some two thousand screenplays and dialogue continuities available for study on the premises. These are predominantly American, including a large number of Allied Artists and Republic Pictures films. We have an extensive collection of vertical files on individual films, personalities, organizations, festivals, and film-related subjects. These files include reviews and other newspaper clippings, magazine articles, program notes, and memorabilia. Through additional grants from the NEA and the NYSCA we are in the process of preserving these valuable materials on microfiche, a project supervised by Stephen Harvey. The Study Center also offers an up-to-date set of bibliographical cards (1972 to the present) compiled for the FIAF International Index to Film Periodicals. Also available are important reference books like the *AFI Catalog*, *The New York Times Film Reviews*, the

old and new *Film Index*, *The Biograph Bulletins*, *Deutsche Stummfilme*, various guides to 16mm distributors, and a nearly complete run of *The Film Daily Yearbook*. Although we keep many current film periodicals in the Study Center, space limitations presently dictate that bound volumes of older periodicals and most film books be housed in the Museum's main library. Many rare items such as the Herman G. Weinberg scrapbooks and extensive runs of *Moving Picture World (Motion Picture Herald)* and *Photoplay* are included. Scholars anticipating a need to have access to such items are advised to make an appointment with the librarians by calling 956-7236.

Special Materials

The Study Center offers a number of rare or unique collections to qualified scholars. The original cards from the WPA Writers' Project provide credit information on early films and personalities unavailable through other sources. There is a run of *Vitagraph Bulletins* from 1909 to 1916, and we have an extensive collection of scripts from the Edison Company. There are also a number of original documents related to the films of Fritz Lang, Robert Flaherty, and Thomas Ince. We have copies of documents pertinent to the New York State censorship of Soviet silent films.

The Merritt Crawford Archive contains chiefly unpublished papers including Crawford's correspondence with many film pioneers including De Forest, Dickson, Edison, Friese-Greene, Lauste, Le Prince, Leroy, Lumière, Marey, Méliès, and dozens of others. The as-yet-uncataloged Artkino Collection of Rosa and Sam Madell will eventually provide scripts and other documentation for Soviet films released in the States over the course of several decades. Amos Vogel has donated a complete indexed set of his Cinema 16 program notes from 1947 to 1963.

D. W. Griffith left the Museum about a half-million original documents relating to all phases of his career and life through 1936. This has been supplemented by the collections of Billy Bitzer, Carol Dempster, Barnet Braverman, and the records of the Biograph Company. Most of this material is restricted to advanced Griffith scholars by appointments arranged with Eileen Bowser who cataloged and supervises this collection. Much Griffith material is available in the Study Center, however. Microfilms of Griffith's extensive scrapbooks containing reviews of all his features and Joseph Henabery's historical documentation gathered in preparation for *Intolerance* can be viewed by appointment with Pearl Moeller of the Museum library (956-7237). Moeller is also responsible for the Museum's special collection of Eisenstein's scripts and other papers.

Although the Museum now has a large and growing poster collection, shortage of staff and space has heretofore prevented cataloging, display, and study. This situation will shortly be remedied, but it will be some time before one may come here with relatively free access to study posters.

Stills

The Film Stills Archive is separate from the Study Center. The Museum houses one of the world's largest collections of film stills. These are made available to educational institutions and publishers only. Duplicates of original stills may be purchased at the cost of four dollars for students and small film journals and five dollars for other publications. Any copyrights must be cleared by the purchaser, and stills may only be duplicated in the Museum's lab. No originals may be borrowed or purchased. Appointments should be made directly with Mary Corliss (956-4209).

The Future

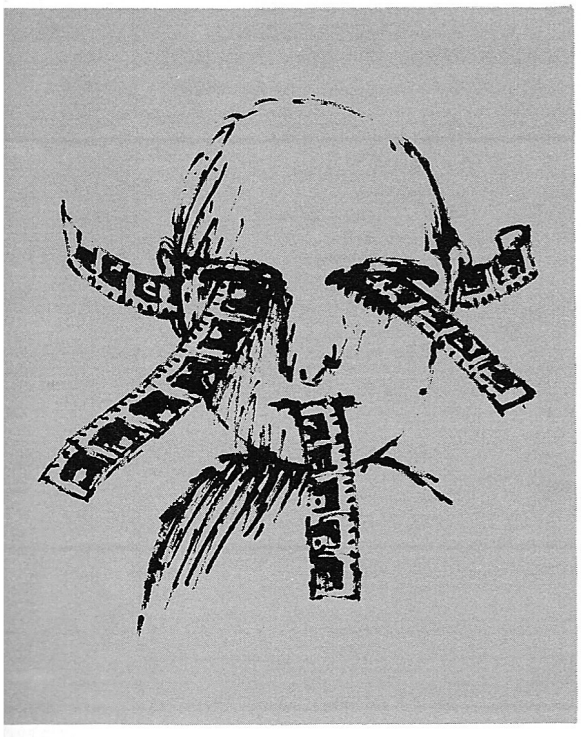
On July 1, 1975, Ted Perry, formerly director of Cinema Studies at New York University, assumed the post of director of the Department of Film. Only two weeks later, in an address before a conference of film scholars at the City University of New York, Perry stressed that one of his major priorities was "a truly *public* study center, open...to a much broader community. I'm talking about twenty or thirty Steenbecks, and a large collection of films which fill the gaps in our international archives." This position was reiterated the following winter in Perry's first official presentation of his goals and aspirations before the Museum's board of trustees. In addition, he expressed a desire to expand the study facilities into other media, notably video, an area into which the Museum has only recently made tentative steps.

Thus, although the Film Study Center is currently bound by the rather severe limitations mentioned above, there is a very genuine hope and a fairly specific plan to make the Museum's film collection and other resources more freely available. The idea is very challenging to me and my colleagues, of course, although we must anticipate that this growth, however welcome and overdue, will not be without its share of pain. We are looking forward, in any case, to meeting many of the readers of *American Film* in the time to come.

Charles Silver supervises the Film Study Center at the Museum of Modern Art.

McMurtry *from page 7*

3) An untitled cross-country trip movie (for Peter Bogdanovich) that might have featured Marcello Mastroianni and Cybill Shepherd. He was to drive her across country in a Maserati, and she was to take him to the cleaners. This one floundered after less than thirty pages because I was unable to suspend my disbelief. Usually, I can suspend any amount of disbelief, but not this time. I kept trying to picture Marcello in Joplin, Missouri, and it just didn't seem right, and for some reason I was unable to devise a cross-country route that wouldn't take them through Joplin. Also, generally speaking, I don't feel the common directorial need to make a trek picture should be indulged.
4) "The Floating Opera" (screenplay, unproduced). This attempt to script the excellent novel by John Barth was done for a Washington-based independent production company, and had some interesting, if not unique, features to it. For one, a short trial film, known as the mini-film, had already been done before I was hired to do the script. This film was something like twenty minutes long and had been done in order to interest investors. Evidently it didn't interest any, which is too bad because it was an excellent mini-film. Somehow the combination of having seen an excellent mini-film, plus having to work with an excellent book, inhibited my script. All attempts to improve on the mini-film failed, probably because the book was too good. The fun of "The Floating Opera" is in the language, not in the situations or even in the characters, and nothing is harder than filming language. Most of the people involved felt it should be a puzzle movie, the puzzle being the character of Tod. In an effort to oblige them I produced a script consisting of about 175 mini-scenes—a kind of mosaic of glimpses—in which, I must admit, not only Tod but much else was puzzling.
5) "Charlie Gallagher, My Love" (screenplay, unproduced, for Bart-Palevsky). Could have been and may still be a lovely movie, about a small Italian family circus that ends up having to trek across the American West in the 1870s. The theme is a kind of reverse Jamesian, in which new America destroys old Europe, as the West nibbles away at the little circus. The story has such built-in poignancy that it's hard to see how it could fail; why it hasn't been produced is one of the little mysteries in which Hollywood abounds.



Then, recently, Hollywood seemed veritably to erupt with possibilities for me, a few of which I'll list to show the extreme variety of subject matter which a given screenwriter will have paraded before him in a short space of time. Would I be interested in working up an original script about the (probably) oldest established whorehouse in America, i.e., the recently defunct Chicken Farm, near La Grange, Texas? The answer was yes, but, as often happens, that was as far as things went. How about a TV pilot based on *Hud*? That seemed promising, so I did it, throwing in several characters who weren't in the movie and even one or two who weren't in the book, coming out with what seemed to me an ideal ranch comedy-melodrama, complete with wild stepson, sententious grandfather, cranky grandmother, sexy cook, moony adolescent, drifting cowboy, Chicano ranch hands, and even a pig. The Green Acres pig could have returned to the screen! Alas, no deal. The networks in their wisdom walked right on by.

Then, in the realm of serious offers, there was *The Massacre at Fall Creek*, Jessamyn West's provocative novel about the first white men to be hung for killing Indians in America (Indiana, the 1820s). This I have done, with the always intelligent help of Jack Clayton, who will direct. This was a comparatively easy movie to "find," since it is about what happens in a small frontier community when that community, unexpectedly, has to choose between hanging some of its own members, or risk being wiped out by vengeance-minded red men. The problem of selection, in so far as there is one, is a choice of whose dilemma to highlight, one of the murderer-victims, or one of the citizen-judges—or both?

Just prior to doing *Massacre at Fall Creek*, I had had another brief try at adapting historical material, the material being a very long and very bad semidocumentary novel about nineteenth-century Los Angeles. It was to have been called "Hell Hole," I believe, and may still be called "Hell Hole," but the outline I did seemed to raise questions as to whether we really needed to know, dramatically or otherwise, that much about nineteenth-century L.A.

Immediately after *Massacre at Fall Creek* I was offered—and did a script for—*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, which is also, in its way, historical material. It is a book which deals with a kind of variant of the American sensibility, rather precisely fixed in time: the late sixties. It was an extremely interesting book in which to try and "find" a movie—perhaps I didn't succeed but I loved trying. The fun of the book, again, is in the language rather than the situations, with the additonal problem that the language in this case is supplemented by Ralph Stedman's drawing. I suggested—half-seriously—that the project be turned over to Ralph Bakshi, but got no takers. Happily, the situations are also funny, but the emotion in the book is nestled into the material in an unusual way. It is essentially *political* emotion, and expresses itself as rage against the culture—little if any of it flows from character to character. Yet to put too heavy a meaning on the political aspects of the emotion would be heavy-handed at best; what it seemed to me one should try for was a wild and essentially meaningless binge movie, with much movement and a lot of the sort of wacky, energetic profanity in which the book abounds, leaving the director's eye to find what meaning it can in the melee of Las Vegas.

An ancillary problem, but one that belongs to the producers rather than the writer, is whom to pitch this movie to. The teenagers who will see it when and if it's made will not have been radicalized drug freaks in the late sixties—will they know what's happening? Will there be enough children of the revolution left around to count at the box office, and if so do they have enough mind left to remember the late sixties? Yet, with all its problems, it was a fascinating book to try and do, because, with the right touch, the right director, and appealing casting, it could be a short, hilarious film.

I had hardly written the last page of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* before I was offered a book called *The Life of the First Woman Game Warden*, which, it turns out, is not an experimental novel but a book about the first woman game warden. That, as it happens, is another story, but certainly no one can tell me that finding movies in America isn't rife with surprises.

Larry McMurtry is the screenwriter of *The Last Picture Show* and a contributing editor to *American Film*.

FOCUS ON AMERICA:

An Annual Competition to Award Excellence in College-level Film Training and Study.

FOCUS ON AMERICA is being sponsored by Nissan Motor Corporation with The American Film Institute acting as a working advisor on the project and aiding in the judging of the competition. FOCUS will give an opportunity for film students from all across the United States to compete for cash awards in the categories of Filmmaking and Film Study.

The FOCUS competition asks that the entrant submit a short film (animated, narrative, experimental, or documentary) or write a full-length piece of film criticism, history, or theory that explores the single theme:

On The Road In America.

The entrants will be judged on their ability to express within their chosen category what the Road means to America and Americans in terms of values, attitudes, and myth. And, beyond the thoughtful exploration of this year's theme, the entrants will be judged on the excellence of their filmmaking abilities or their studied knowledge of American cinema and the ability to write of it cogently and imaginatively. Awards will be presented at two special premieres to be held on the East and West coasts.

Both Datsun and AFI hope that this year's FOCUS will be the first of many student awards competitions devoted to demonstrating how filmmaking and film study can provide a special insight into the various aspects of The American Experience.

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DATSUN PRESENTS

Selznick's Fabulous Folly

On Making *GWTW*

Brigitte Weeks

Almost as good as seeing the movie," I said to myself as I turned the last page. High praise indeed from one who has seen *Gone With the Wind* five times. Roland Flamini has put together a book[1] on the happening that became the movie. I say "put together" because his lively and readable account is interspersed every two or three pages with many stills from the picture and a few background snaps of the stars off-duty. The illustrations are crucial to unfolding the making of the movie. Used full page, double spread, without stint and meticulously reproduced, they bring back the faces and the emotions, the high moments and the despairs of the characters as we get to know both them and the stars who played them. Integrating the pictures into the text, rather than grouping them in a couple of bunches, was a masterstroke.

I mention the illustrations first, because this is after all a book about a visual experience—a four-hour-and-twenty-seven minute one constructed around a 1,037-page novel. Everything about *Gone With the Wind* was gargantuan, from the novel manuscript to the movie via the stars, the producer, and the Pentagon-style budget. As Flamini says, "The filming was to be a Hollywood casebook, unique yet typical: unique in its enormous scope, cost, length, and time spent in the making...typical in its commitment to Hollywood—its attitudes, resources, conventions, methods, and intrigues."

Set in 1939, the year that saw the declaration of World War II, this Hollywood casebook is overflowing with the stuff of legend. All the lead characters on or off the screen were several times larger than life. Towering above them all and brilliantly characterized in this book is David O. Selznick, in name the producer but in fact the commander, the conductor, the generalissimo, and white-hot flame behind it all.

Operating on a perpetually uncertain budget, borrowing money at every turn, Selznick saw *Gone With the Wind* as his movie. He demanded the impossible—2,500 extras at an hour's notice—and got it—1,500 extras and 1,000 dummies. He used up directors like Kleenex—Victor Fleming replaced George Cukor; Sam Wood filled in while Fleming had his breakdown, and continued to direct when it was over; when the first string of directors was recuperating, the second string was hard at work filming. But David Selznick never flagged. Flamini gives us only one glimpse of weakness, a fitting one: At last the secret preview begins, the audience gasps and cheers "and Selznick started to weep."

Scarlett and Rhett were legendary before anyone was selected to play the roles. The search for Scarlett became a national hobby with candidates, backers, and ballyhoo resembling a presidential election. The right combination of fire and beauty, sex appeal and toughness was not easy to find. Margaret Mitchell describes her heroine as having "an arresting face, pointed chin, square of jaw. Her eyes were pale green without a touch of hazel, starred with bristly black lashes." Tallulah Bankhead, Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis, and Carole Lombard fell by the wayside; girls were delivered nude in boxes to Selznick's house, emerged quoting Scarlett from life-sized Christmas cards, and mobbed his scouts. Everyone had an opinion—except Margaret Mitchell who refused to become involved and anyway took more interest in the role of Melanie.

The search for Scarlett cost $92,000—though Flamini reckons the publicity was cheap at the price—a total of 1,400 candidates were interviewed and 90 got as far as screen tests. Vivien Leigh was a late starter with her English accent and her love affair with Laurence Olivier against her. Time was running out, and Selznick decided to take the chance. He might have had some second thoughts had he known that at the Atlanta premiere she would fail to recognize the tune "Dixie" and remarked of a local school band, "Oh, they're playing the song from our picture." But by that time the English lass had become the eternal Southern belle.

David O. Selznick, Vivien Leigh during the filming of GWTW.

Casting Rhett was more a series of business negotiations than a talent hunt. Clark Gable did not want the role. He felt uncertain of his ability, but studios did not ask actors' opinions in those days, and Gable became Butler. The fragile ego and assumed worldliness revealed here off-stage may cloud his glamorous image, but the close-up stills of him in velvet jacket and crooked smile show at a glance why he was the only match for Scarlett.

One fascinating character in "the cast of thousands" was not in fact associated with the film in any official capacity. Peggy Marsh, alias Margaret Mitchell, the author of *Gone With the Wind*, refused from the beginning to become embroiled in the Selznick-created furor. She remained a match for the schemes of Hollywood publicists but couldn't resist taking a close interest in the transformation of her creation. She was "tiny—less than five feet tall—pretty, and quiet spoken. People sometimes mistook her mildness for timidity, but wrapped inside the soft, cheerful exterior was a will of iron."

Mitchell lingered on the fringes, sharply rebuffing efforts to exploit her opinions. Nevertheless, she did give Selznick some good advice. For example, she insisted that a home furlough for Ashley Wilkes be written back into the script to free the birth of Melanie's baby from any hint of scandal. At the Atlanta premiere she finally met Clark Gable (she had secretly preferred Basil Rathbone). Flamini reports that "a large curious crowd collected to witness the encounter between the novelist and the incarnation of her hero. Embarrassed by the attention, she took Gable firmly by the arm, led him into the ladies' room and locked the door."

Scarlett, Rhett, and a Cast of Thou-

[1] *Scarlett, Rhett, and a Cast of Thousands: The Filming of Gone With the Wind* by Roland Flamini. New York: Macmillan, 355 pp., illustrated, $13.95.

sands re-creates the mythic atmosphere of the historic movie, but it also shares with the reader the day-to-day nitty-gritty task of filming an ambitious movie using a still imperfect technology. Old sets were burned to re-create the fall of Atlanta, kept under control by complex sprinkler systems. Technicolor was then in its infancy, and many of the panoramic backgrounds were superimposed by a technique known as matte painting which gives the film its strangely dated, yet romantic, look today. Clark Gable thought weeping would destroy his screen image. Vivien Leigh's slaps were so real that her screen maid threatened to quit. David Selznick was fined $5,000 for the impropriety of Rhett's famous line, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn," but he managed to save it from the censors. After reading this book I shall bring the knowing air of a true insider to my sixth viewing of *Gone With the Wind*, which will be fun—so is the book.

Brigitte Weeks is managing editor of the "Book World" section in *The Washington Post*.

Hollywoodizing Canada

A Nation's Screen Image

Sam Kula

In "The Canadian Dilemma" (*American Film*, November 1975), Bruce Cook concludes that "the problem, as always in Canada, is the nagging, troublesome one of identity. What are those qualities that define the national character? What does Ontario have in common with Quebec? What does it mean to be Canadian?" Cook speculates that it may well be one of the tasks for Canadian filmmakers to come up with the answers. Yet given the harsh economic realities facing a Canadian cottage industry in competition with massive American conglomerate interests, one doubts its ability to do so without large-scale governmental protection and support.

The pervasive influence of film in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century has been almost exclusively American. Canada was—and is—an extension of the American market (*Variety* still reports gross returns from North America as domestic earnings) with distribution and exhibition firmly controlled by American and British interests. The historic effect of this economic control on attempts to establish an independent Canadian film industry is becoming very well established as a task force follows committee following commission across the landscape.

Pierre Berton's *Hollywood's Canada: The Americanization of Our National Image*[1] is the first attempt to assess what was happening, not to the fledgling filmmakers in Canada, but to the image of Canada and Canadians on Canadian and world screens. For it was an image manufactured in America; it was consistently false, frequently defamatory, and maliciously negative overall, as though Canadians enjoyed the same minority status in America as native blacks and Indians.

Pierre Berton is not a historian, nor a sociologist, nor even a film critic, as these callings are currently rated. He is one of Canada's most prolific authors and busiest broadcasters, with works ranging from popular histories of the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway (*The National Dream* and *The Last Spike*), which Berton narrated as a very successful TV series, to autobiographical accounts of the North Country, informed by the fact that he is a devoted son of the Yukon (*Klondike* and *Drifting Home*). The genesis of this new work was a fresh assessment of the Hollywood version of three major events in Canadian history: *The Far Country*, in which James Stewart single-handedly brings law and order to the Yukon during the Klondike gold rush; *Canadian Pacific*, in which Randolph Scott single-handedly builds Canada's first transcontinental railway; and *Northwest Mounted Police*, in which Gary Cooper single-handedly puts down Riel's rebellion of 1885.

They were big pictures that presented massive distortions of historical fact, but they were only prominent examples of a grand total of 575 films produced in Hollywood between 1907 and 1975 that Berton identifies as ostensibly set in Canada. Every one of them in reality was set in Hollywood's Canada, a vast wilderness of endless pine trees, windswept snow fields, majestic ice-covered mountains, and raging rivers. The advertisements sum up the approach: *Thrill and Throb Among the Snow-Clad Mountains...A Mountie's Roaring Guns! A Dog's Vengeful Fangs!...Challenging the Klondike's Snow and Sin and Greed Where Gold Was the Lure and the Fanciest Woman in Dawson His for the Taking*. It was a Canada of trackless wastes, where the only law was survival of the fittest, where the mythologies of the American West could flourish on a perpetual frontier of ice and snow. An idealized North Country could still offer hardy pioneers virgin territory unsullied by the trappings of civilization.

It was escapist fare in every way. Berton points out that, based on the evidence of American films, Canada was entirely populated by Americans escaping the law, or broken homes, or broken hearts, or the weltschmerz of affluence. The films were mostly B-pictures or worse; program dramas with forgettable titles like *Call of the North, The Place Beyond the Winds, On the Great White Trail, Beyond the Shadows, Prisoner of the Pines, The Law of the North, The Wilderness Trail, God's Country and the Law*, and *Outpost of the Mounties*.

For Hollywood, one of the great lures of the North was the Northwest Mounted Police and their successors, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. More than half (Berton counts 256) of the films whose plot contents were analyzed have a Mountie as a central character. From the wretched excesses of four versions of *Rose Marie*, through Shirley Temple winning the West in *Susannah of the Mounties*, to an endless series of Renfrews, O'Malleys, O'Rourkes, McKennas, Morans, and Steeles serving king and country, the redcoats rode through Hollywood's Canada if not always singing, at least always "getting their man." Even the slogan is Hollywood's. The RCMP motto is "Maintain the Right." The RCMP came to loathe the Hollywood version and its convenient plot twist of the Mountie dishonored because he failed to get his man (usually because the man in question is his sweetheart's brother!).

It is easy enough to discount the significance of Berton's findings by concentrating exclusively on the factual errors, frequently trivial, his eagle eye discovers in Hollywood's Canada. Despite the presence of ex-Corporal Bruce Carruthers, an authentic resident "Mountie" (a term the force itself never uses) available as technical adviser when the budget allowed such a luxury, Hollywood could never get the hat right. The chevrons were usually sewn on upside down, American style. As an authority on the Yukon and the Canadian West, Berton is also incensed when the physical geography is abused—rivers flow the wrong way; Hudson Bay shifts west; the Rocky Mountains shift east. Fundamental differences are ignored: Canadian prospectors and trappers drank tea, not coffee; they shouted "mush" at their dogs, not "haw"; and they didn't draw their guns and blast away at one another at the slightest provocation. In short they

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[1] *Hollywood's Canada: The Americanization of Our National Image* by Pierre Berton. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 303 pp., illustrated, $13.95.

were not American, but the world believed they behaved the same way.

What did it all mean? What were the effects of a steady diet of this distorted fare on Canadian self-image and on the world view of Canada? Along with Berton we can only speculate. Margarete Atwood, attempting to synthesize the themes of Canadian literature in *Survival*, stressed the need for a national image made in Canada. "If the viewer is given a mirror that reflects not him but someone else, and is told at the same time the reflection he sees is himself, he will get a very distorted idea of what he is really like." The real significance of Berton's content analysis flows from the unconscious acceptance by millions of Canadians of the stereotypes populating Hollywood's Canada. Perhaps the most vicious was that of the drunken, sex-crazed French Canadian, the staple villain in hundreds of films.

It is not, however, the errors of fact that Berton, and finally the reader, most resent. It is the value system that is exported North along with the American frontier surrogates. One of the distinguishing characteristics of Canadian settlement of the West and the Far North, for example, was the presence at all times of the rule of law. The militia and RCMP always preceded or accompanied settlement. There were no shoot-outs at Canadian equivalents of the "OK Corral." Disputes were settled in a court of law, and the incidence of bloodshed was so low (whether natives or white settlers were involved) that the death penalty was an exceedingly rare event. Hollywood may have had difficulty adjusting to the fact that in the entire Red River Rebellion of 1809 only one life was taken (a Protestant fanatic named Thomas Scott), and even that took place after a judicial hearing by the Provisional Government. Canadians familiar with their history would not be surprised.

There is not too much point in speculating whether a native Canadian film industry would have emerged if American interests had not dominated the North American market. In the context of the current debate on Canadian content and protective quotas in periodical publishing and television as well as films, it is, however, salutary to remember the Canadian Cooperation Project of 1948 as an example of effective lobbying by the American industry against controls. In a scenario which reads as if it were written by Preston Sturges, the Canadian Government was persuaded to forego taxes on $17 million of film revenue leaving Canada annually in exchange for the promise of Hollywood's cooperation in building Canada's tourist industry. In practice what the government received was the dubious services of Colonel Blake Owensmith flitting about Hollywood endeavoring to persuade scriptwriters to insert a mention of Canada wherever possible. One of Owensmith's triumphs, for example, was a dialogue reference in *New York Confidential*—"They caught Louis Engleday on his way to Canada."

Berton closes *Hollywood's Canada* with a limp assemblage of opinions on what Canada is like, drawn from show business luminaries, as though there were some significance in the ignorance displayed. It's a disappointing trivialization of his research. It is, after all, the attitude and opinions of Canadians that are truly at issue. We may not be able to objectively measure the impact of Hollywood's image on the Canadian search for national identity, but at least the image made in America has been nailed to the wall for closer examination. It may still be possible to make a "Mountie" movie with the redcoats singing their way through the endless Northern wastes, but Canadian audiences will be far less likely to sing along.

Sam Kula is the director of the National Film Archives of Canada.

Titan of Termite Terrace

On Tex Avery

Win Sharples

Now you might say I grew up around cartoons in a special way besides the way we all did seeing them at the movies. My father had started with Van Buren Studios just about the time I was born—1932—and joined the Fleischers in time for the move to Florida. He was brought in initially as an orchestrator because Sammy Timberg, the nominal musical director and a fine tunesmith, was unable to write music, which, unsurprisingly, proved to be something of a handicap in his work.

I retain to this day a wondrous fascination with the oscilloscope, and I adored the opportunities of seeing the screenings of pencil tests, which somehow seemed the most perfect of all cartoons because so much was left to the imagination. Since I went on myself to be involved more in editing, my own kids, sadly deprived, had to make do with brightly colored plastic 35mm cores as building blocks, never to know the pleasure of the pencil test.

A great favorite of mine on visits to the studio was Jack Mercer, who as a story man invariably had his wall covered with the sketches of the storyboard and was always willing to demonstrate his wonderful Popeye voice to me. I even remember when Shamus Culhane was only Jimmy and his lovely wife, Bettina, kept a huge Raggedy Ann doll on her bed. It was great to go over to visit them because you could look at the Vargas Girls in the back copies of *Esquire* the Culhanes always kept on the coffee table.

Well, anyway, you can see why I might have gone to see *Bugs Bunny Superstar*, although I must say he has never been my absolute favorite (which the Road Runner definitely is), and I might as well say right now that I consider it unarguable that Chuck Jones is a consummate comedic artist and the natural and rightful heir to, and ultimate perfecter of, the form established by Sennett, Keaton, Chaplin, and Lloyd. *Bugs Bunny Superstar* was somewhat disappointing, but there were two absolutely mindbending moments that made the trip worthwhile. The first, in "I Taw a Putty Tat," which somehow slipped in despite its obvious absence of rabbits, was a very simple thing: Tweety Pie racing into a room with Sylvester in hot pursuit, slamming a door just a split second too late to catch the cat and then without batting an eye pulling a second door out of nowhere and flipping it into the startled cat's face, no questions asked, no explanations given or needed. You want a door, you got a door!

The second moment occurred in "My Favorite Duck," which was also devoid of bunnies and was, not coincidentally, directed by the aforementioned Jones. It is, like all great comic moments, almost indescribable after the fact. It begins with Porky, drowsing in a canoe while fishing. Daffy Duck stalks into the scene along the lake bottom, clearly visible, reaches up and slowly and precisely tilts the canoe upside down, Porky remaining totally oblivious to the act. Daffy then takes the fish line, which now stretches up into the air, and ties it to a branch while the camera slowly tilts in a 180-degree circle restoring the canoe to an upright position but leaving Porky asleep under water. Daffy then pulls the line, waking Porky who reacts violently, realizes something is amiss—although hardly grasping the

full impact of the situation—and then leaps out of the boat in a graceful swan dive—underwater of course!—at the precise moment that Jones flips the screen again in time for Porky to come hurtling up out of the water into the air. Just absolutely breathtaking, and perfectly, unexplainedly acceptable within the universe that Jones has created, sustained on its aesthetic high wire by the precision of the execution. And that, it seems to me, is the quintessence of the cartoon.

Tex Avery: King of Cartoons[1] (Caesar of Cels? Marquis of Mirth? Titan of Termite Terrace?) was written by Joe Adamson, who is already, on the evidence of *Groucho, Harpo, Chico, and Sometimes Zeppo*, a very funny fellow. Avery is the man Robert Clampett described in *Bugs Bunny Superstar* as "the world's cartoonist," and Clampett, who is very good himself, ought to know, so the title may not be an exaggeration. ("One of the Better Stories Ever Told?" "Tarzan, Duke of the Jungle?" "The Rather Nice Ambersons?") Certainly Avery has never gotten the recognition his work has deserved. And, taking things on the basis that we've been talking about, what we rather inadequately call "the surreal" and meaning the creation of a world not bound by the mundane rules of workaday "reality," limited only by the imagination of the artist and the potential of the medium, Avery might be the logical choice for the quintessential cartoonist.

"Let's go wilder than we did last time. Faster, too." This was Avery's credo. Adamson quotes another lovely statement of Avery's: "We found out early that if you did something with a character, either animal or human or whatnot, that couldn't possibly be rigged up in live action, why then you've got a guaranteed laugh....If you take a fellow and have him get hit on the head and then he cracks up like a piece of china, then you know you've got a laugh. Because they cannot do it live!" And it somehow seems perfectly natural to discover that Avery, a genuine "auteur" of the Hollywood cartoon, was a rather poor draftsman—in contrast to fellow-directors Jones, Clampett, and McKimson who were superlative animators. Avery was blind in one eye; he lost that eye when a fellow resident of Termite Terrace, the dilapidated outbuilding that housed the Warners cartoon unit, shot a paper clip into it with a rubber band, just another little prank of the fun-loving group at the Terrace.

Walter Lantz on Avery: "The thing about Avery is that he can write a cartoon, lay it out, time it, do the whole thing himself. And when he's finished, it's great. He just knows comedy."

Heck Allen (Warners/MGM story man): "Tex, of course, was always totally in charge of anything he ever did....Tex never had anybody. He laid the pictures out for the goddamn background man; he did everything for the so-called character man....Tex did it all, the guy just cleaned up after him....I would have to say that Tex had to provide ninety-eight percent of everything that went into those cartoons. And his influence pervaded and permeated the product far beyond the story room....He just doesn't want to argue with people. I never argued with him. Well, how could you? I mean, you're sitting there knocked out on your chair, laughing your ass off all day long, you can't very well argue with the guy that's bringing tears to your eyes."

So, why a book on Avery? Why not just go to the cartoons? (Adamson would be the first to admit that Avery's work is indescribable; of all the forms of film, the animated cartoon—surrealistic division—would seem to be that area least in need of explanation, most vulnerable to the dispelling of its magic.) Well, first of all, Adamson is well qualified for this job, possessed of a considerable sense of humor and knowing his subject very well. He also happens to write concisely and well, which doesn't hurt. His brief history of the cartoon is nicely done and illuminating, and he has a way of pegging something like Disney, or rotoscoping, or the pencil test, or the essence of animation in a bright, succinct paragraph. He tells some very good stories—his interviews with Michael Maltese, Heck Allen, and Avery himself are delightful.

Avery is a very good subject and Adamson is a funny guy and he manages to clear up which cartoons Avery did—which I hope will put an end to supposedly very knowledgeable people who should know better than to attribute Tom and Jerry Cartoons to Avery. (Avery ran a separate unit at MGM at the same time that Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera were doing the Tom and Jerrys, but he never, repeat *never*, directed one.)

As I mentioned before, Adamson has a way of explaining things very clearly and precisely along the way of tracing Avery's career—Lantz (1930-35), Warners (1936-41), MGM (1941-54) and back to Lantz (1954-55)—and alerting us to the key cartoons in an appetite-whetting way, and if you dare to miss seeing anything in Adamson's Five-Star Category—"A great short film is a thing of joy forever"—"Who Killed Who," "King-Size Canary," "Bad Luck Blackie," "Little Rural Riding Hood," and "Drag Along Droopy," all MGM Averys, you'll regret it to your dying day.

Adamson also goes a long way toward clarifying the Bugs Bunny parentage question—the rabbit had appeared in two cartoons by Ben Hardaway and Cal Dalton ("Porky's Hare Hunt" and "Hare-Um Scarum") and one by Jones ("Elmer's Candid Camera"), but all concerned seem to agree that his true character emerged only in the fourth in the series, Avery's "A Wild Hare"—and describes the other characters of Avery's creation, notably Droopy Dog, the mercifully short-lived Screwy Squirrel and George and Junior, and the most Averyish of all, the sex-crazed MGM Wolf. (The name "Bugs," by the way, according to Peter Bogdanovich who got it from Chuck Jones, came from the fact that Ben Hardaway's nickname was "Bugs," and so the early sketches referred to the inchoate character as "Bugs" Bunny; Adamson doesn't mention this; I just thought I'd throw it in.)

The book gives us basically what we need as an exploration of the mad world of Avery: filmography, interviews, and a first shot at a theory of Avery. This brings up my only real complaint about the book, which is that its art direction and design is quite possibly the worst I have ever seen. I know that frame blowups of cartoons tend to be fuzzy—although I'm not entirely certain that this is unavoidable—and I suppose black and white was inevitable, although it is hardly an asset here. But it is the entire layout of the book, the placement of the illustrations, the cropping, the size chosen—invariably wrong—and their relationship and significance to the text that is off. It is the kind of grisly joke—a book on a visual medium atrociously designed—that would probably appeal to Avery's bizarre sense of humor, but it certainly does not do his work, or Adamson's for that matter, the justice it deserves.

So I like the book, and so will you if you like cartoons and if you want to understand a little more about a wonderful man who lit up the sky of a very special world in a very special way.

Heck Allen again: "Tex loves to be funny; I think he'd kill himself to get a laugh. And this is not in the public sense. He doesn't show off in public, he's very quiet. This is to provide a laugh for somebody in a theater two thousand miles and two years away from right then. His whole life is humor." What a great thing to be able to say.

[1]*Tex Avery: King of Cartoons* by Joe Adamson. New York: Popular Library, 238 pp., illustrated, $3.95.

Win Sharples is an administrator for preservation and documentation at The American Film Institute.

Periodicals

Recent writings of note on film and television. For information on where listed publications can be obtained write to Education Liaison, The American Film Institute, J. F. Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C. 20566

Antonio Chemasi

The Cathode Cello

Television, one speaker said, is "a tool as powerful as the atom bomb." That was one of the more subdued observations at a gathering of avant-garde artists at MIT, reports Benjamin Forgey in *Smithsonian*. The artists had long ago kicked the paint habit and moved on to computers, lasers, sound, water, and television. As Nam June Paik, regarded by some as the father of television as art, put it: "The cathode tube will replace the canvas." Charlotte Moorman, the sometime topless cellist, was present to demonstrate that television has replaced the cello. She performed on Paik's creation, the "TV Cello," an instrument consisting of three TV monitors in place of the cello's body. "The first new cello since 1600," said Moorman, as the monitors screened a thinning audience. But there were redeeming artistic benefits, like Juan Downey's stunning videotape version of Velazquez's painting, "The Maid of Honor." Then a video panel got down to a debate that sounded suspiciously like the usual TV debate: a probing of TV's political implications, a demand that the airwaves be opened up.

"Arttransition is still in transition" by Benjamin Forgey. *Smithsonian*, March 1976.

Deep Stocking

The alternative ending, not unheard of in Hollywood, seems to be spreading to industry films. *Business Screen* reports that Monsanto screened a film introducing a new line of panty hose at a recent buyers' convention. The film, intended for viewing by prospective customers in women's hosiery departments, showed a rear view of a naked model inching into a panty hose. Several buyers blanched and refused to take the film. Monsanto, like a panicky Hollywood producer, rushed back to the studio and filmed a second ending. The alternative ending shows nothing above the knee.

"Audio-Visuals in the Hosiery Industry" by Trudye Connolly. *Business Screen*, January-February 1976.

Sprocket-Hole Generation

Susan Rice, a film teacher at the New School in New York, took a critical look at her media criticism class and came up with four complaints about the film generation. Students don't like to make judgments, finding that justifying their views is "just too damn enervating"—especially with ubiquitous critics to make judgments for them. Students think that the criteria for film judging "can somehow be handed down to them" like the Ten Commandments. Students "don't understand why, in order to make critical judgments about television, it is necessary to watch television." Their judgments on television, anyway, have "more to do with radio and motion pictures than with video itself...." Finally, students have a "smug self-righteousness" about their illiteracy, calling themselves "visual" as opposed to "literate." "When someone tells me he's a 'film person,' " says Rice, "I look for sprocket holes where armpits are supposed to be."

"The Curse of the Film People" by Susan Rice. *Media & Methods*, January 1976.

Stop! Look and Listen

Henri Langlois, in an interview in *Le Monde*, on the role of his Cinémathèque Française in Paris: "Remember, if the Cinémathèque has been a source of instruction, it's because we've always refused to be 'educational.' We have always left audiences alone with the films without imposing our version of the truth or publishing explanatory notes. Here's a story about that: After the war, the British Film Institute sent us a D. W. Griffith film, *True Heart Susie*, in exchange for one we sent them. As the projection started we heard a voice: 'Though this film is not among Griffith's best, we are showing it for historical reasons.' The audience was infected with a prejudice against the film from the outset and with few exceptions it proved to be very reserved. That's a serious blow against a great film. As soon as you tell the spectator what to think, the virgin purity of his vision is threatened and destroyed."

"Teaching People to Look" by Mathilde La Barbonnie. *Le Monde* (Paris), 14 March 1976.

Fear No Apathy

English teachers sometimes complain that film has stolen students from literature. A Philadelphia teacher has found that film can bring them back. Writing in *Film News*, Sara Scattergood describes her use of "film-poems," a series of seven films by a Canadian couple. Each film contains a reading of a contemporary Canadian poem coupled with powerful matching images. In "The Ebb Begins from Dream" by Earle Birney, a reflection on the cycle of living, the film weaves back and forth between city scenes and ocean views, sometimes superimposing the two. Skid-row men slumped on stoops merge with a grey wood half-submerged in water. Young students, Scattergood found, are absorbed by the films and discussions are animated. "At worst," she says, "no teacher who takes a chance on presenting poetry to children this way needs to fear apathy."

"A Sense of Poetry" by Sara P. Scattergood. *Film News*, January-February 1976.

What Is Real?

Haskell Wexler, the maker of *Medium Cool* and *Interview with My Lai Veterans*, on the documentary process: "I don't believe there is a given 'reality.' All that we have are people's perceptions of what is. When you proceed to make a documentary, you should be as aware as possible of the historical baggage that you, as an individual, carry. I could also use the phrase, an awareness of your personal psychology. The more aware you are of what you bring to a subject, the more chance exists that what you take from the subject has universal validity."

"An Interview with Haskell Wexler" by Renée Epstein. *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1975-76.

If you had been a subscriber to American Film, you would have enjoyed:

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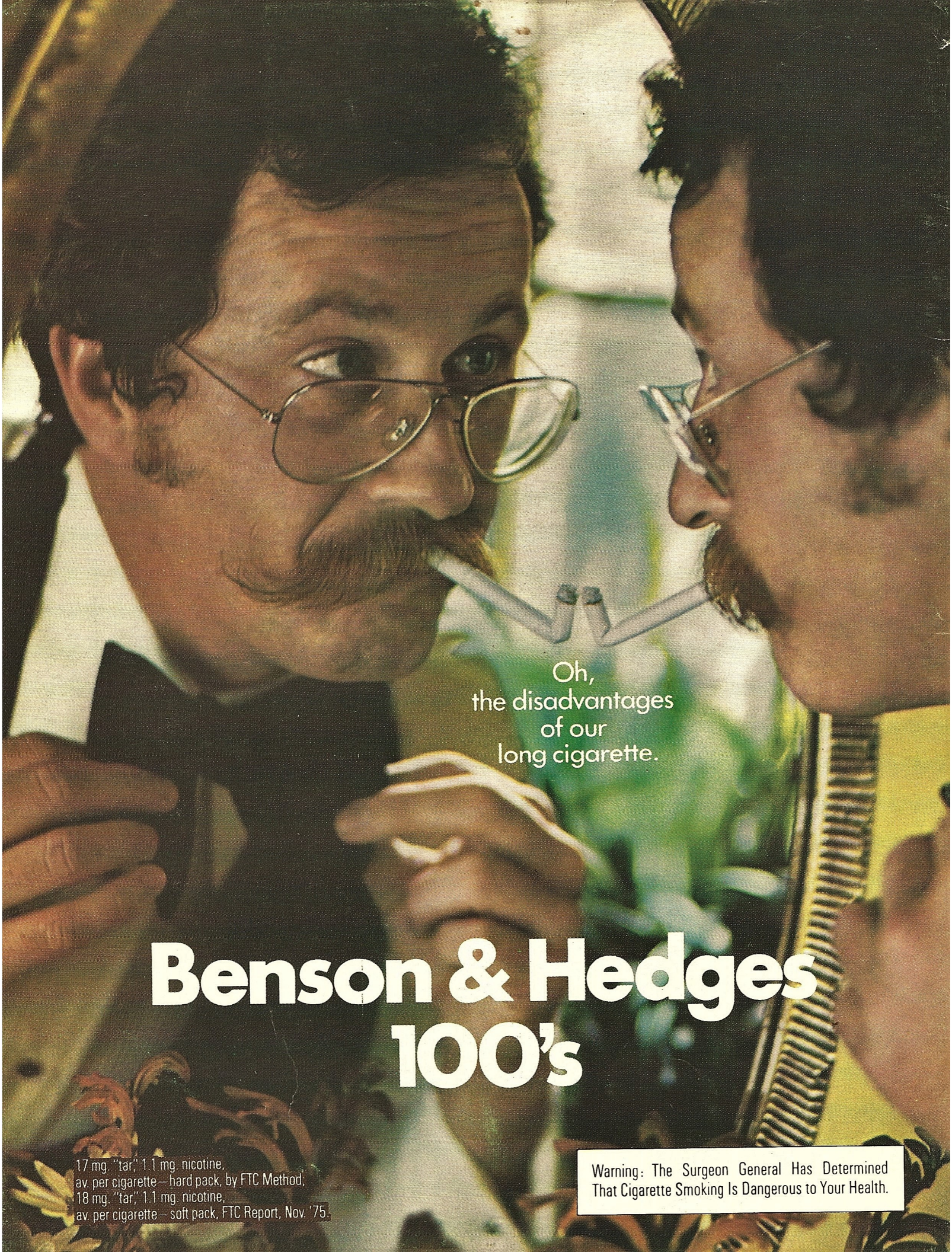
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